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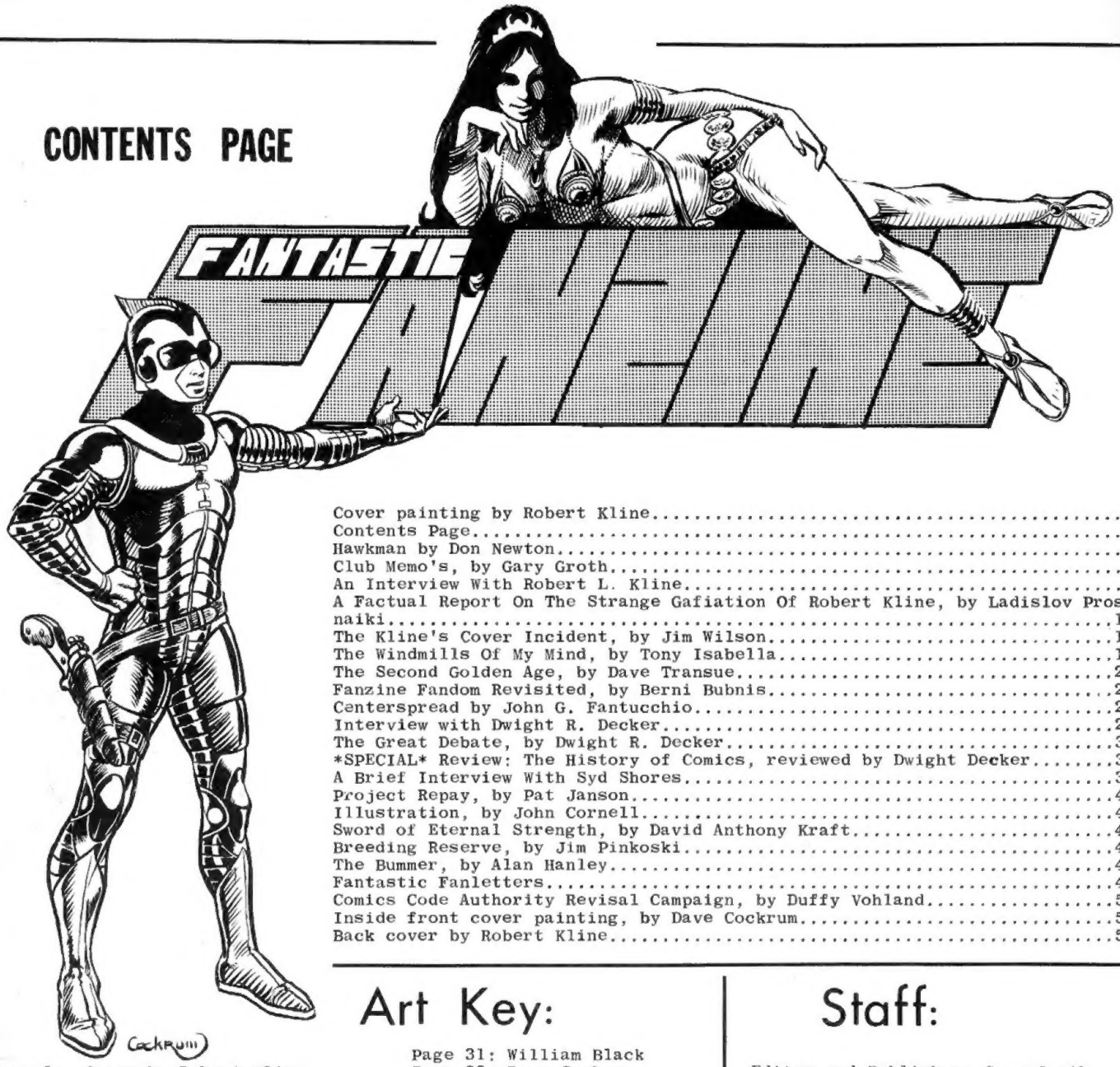

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Staff:

Editor and Publisher: Gary Groth
Corrosponding, typing: Gary Groth
Layout: Gary Groth and Robert Kline
Writers: Contributed from all readers
STAFF ARTISTS: Dave Cockrum, Robert Kline, John Fantucchio, Don Newton, John Adkins Richardson, Jim Pinkoski, William Black, Jay Mike, Al Grinage, Douglas Rice, John Cornell, Mike Roberts, Dennis Fugitake, Steve Hickman.
STAFF WRITERS: Tony Isabella, Dwight Decker, Gordon Matthews, Bill Cantey, Jim Wilson, Tom Crawford, Pat Janson, Duffy Vohland, Dave Transue.

Pro contributions this issue: Sal Buscema, Syd Shores.

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HAWK-
MAN
NEWTON

CLUB MEMO'S

GARY GROTH

We made it!

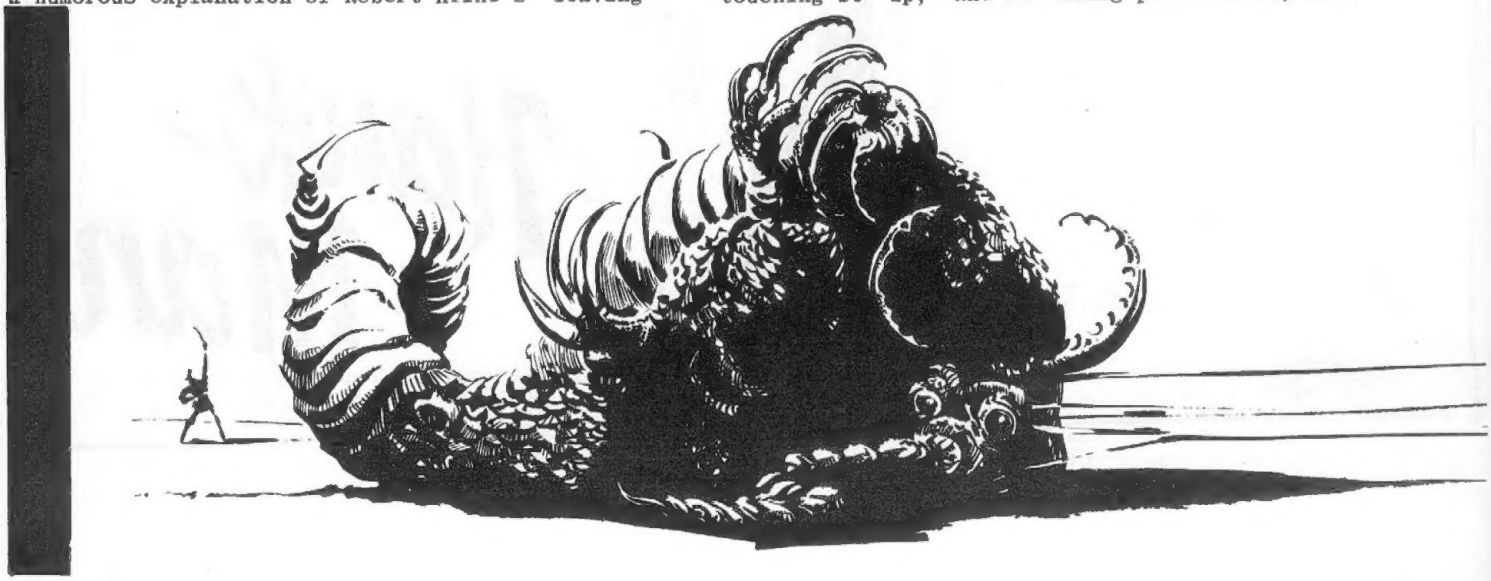
WE MADE IT! It's hard to believe, but yes - after four months of very hard work, this is the final product. In case anyone has even forgotten that they have ordered it, or missed that logo on the cover, THIS IS FANTASTIC FANZINE 12.

This issue is another first for FF! Not only do we have a larger page count this issue than last, but also a processed color cover painting. In case you didn't catch the signature on the lower left hand corner, Bob Kline was the artist who painted it. And, personally speaking, it is truly one of the most beautiful paintings I've ever seen! I hope that reproduction is faithful to the original.

...And the cover painting is just a lead-in to the further adventures with Robert Kline. This issue spotlights Bob with an 8 page interview and the many full page and spot illustrations that accompany it. The satire, "A Factual Report On The Strange Gafiation Of Robert Kline" was written as a humorous explanation of Robert Kline's leaving active fandom. The truth of the matter is, Bob simply needs a rest from his fannish work. Hopefully, though, he'll be back with us in less than a year. Bob also edited and laid out his interview (can you tell the difference between his layout in his interview and the rest of the mag?) and suggested the three-column-per-page format.

the STRENKO...

FF has never published a strip before. So, now, in this issue, we come up with two of them! Alan Hanley sent in the STRENKO strip, inspired by reading the interview with STERANKO last ish. Although it's funny, it's also very relavant to what Steranko was talking about in his interview. Jim Pinkoski's strip goes a little deeper than that. The History of The Breeding Reserve is an interesting one. This strip was first published in The State Hornet, one of Jim's local newspapers. Jim wanted fandom to see it, so he sent it to the Collector's Chronicle (a west coast fanzine). Reproduction was poor, so after touching it up, and re-doing parts of it, sent



it to FF. If anyone would like to comment on the strip to Jim, send your letters through me and I'll be glad to forward them.

fan artists...

A hearty welcome to new fan artists on FF's art staff this issue: First, English fan artist, Dave Harwood who drew the Captain America in the FF Special (page 48) and the Dr. Strange illo in last issue's lettercol. Dave couldn't meet this issue's deadline, but will be back next issue. Don Newton. What can I say about this guy? His beautiful Hawkman page hits you square in the eye when you turn to the first page. And that illo is just a small sample of his talents. An interview with Don is also forthcoming. As I mentioned elsewhere, Jim Pinkoski debuts this issue, and will be back again next ish.

enormous

All back issues (except last issue, # 11), are completely sold out. That means I have absolutely no copies of FF 6*7, 8*9, 10 and the Special left -- and I don't know where you could find them.

SPECIAL NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS: In last issues Contents Page, subscription rates were said to be 5 issues for $3. This was a misprint. Rather, it is 4 issues for $3. I hope all of you understand that it would be financially impossible to sell this fanzine at 60¢ per copy. I'm losing money on FF even now, selling it at 75¢, and charging 60¢ for FF would surely mean its end.

Next issue will be an enormous issue! As you may have already spotted in the Contents Page, subscription rates have again been raised to $4 for 4 issues. Next issue costs $1. If ordered after March 15th, it will cost $1.25. This is primarily due to the fact that I can't use my Bulk Rate Permit on any orders mailed in after March 15th, which means I have to slap 18¢ worth of stamps on the envelope instead of 4¢. FF 13 can be bought for $1 after March 15th only by subscribing.

I hate to sound redundant, or make this editorial space into a soap opera, BUT -- FF is in financial trouble (still). The processed color cover, and the added blue pages cost quite a bit extra to print this issue. After paying as much as I could on our printing bill for this issue, the bill at my printers exceeded the sum of $800.00! This must be paid back in 3 months time. Otherwise, the money must be borrowed from the bank, which would cause even further complications. You can safely assume that FF has absolutely no money whatsoever on hand. I need your help.

Although I don't want to create an atmosphere in this editorial that makes me look like I'm "forcing" any FF products down your throats, I do have a good many FF products for sale this issue. TThe purchase of one, some or any of these products would help FF out tremendously. Most of the items are listed on the blue insert page between pages 16 and 17. However I do have a couple more items:

I have incomplete copies of FF 8*9 and 10 for sale at 20¢ each. They are missing 4 and 8 pages each; no more. I am the sole American Distributor of Fantasy Advertiser, a British ditto zine. I have numbers 32 and 33 on hand, which sell for 50¢ each. They are both over 100 pages in length!

Three new posters have been made. Don Newton's Hawkman, John Fantucchio's Captain Marvel (the outstanding centerspread to this ish), and last issue's Ka-Zar by Robert Kline (which many of you labeled as "classic"!). 50¢ each. Mailed flat, on heavy cardboard backing.

And last, but not least, I have copies of the Program Book and Progress Report of the 1970 Metro Comic Art Convention, the national convention I was chairman of, held in Washington DC. These two items constitute a supporting membership to the con, and can be purchased for $1.00. The Program Book is a real collector's item, with a never-before-seen cover by John Fantucchio - back cover illustration of Conan by SAL BUSCEMA, portfolio of John Fantucchio's greatest fanzine covers, and much more!

Since I only gave myself 2 pages to talk this ish, I'll have to cut it short. Regards to all --

GARY GROTH

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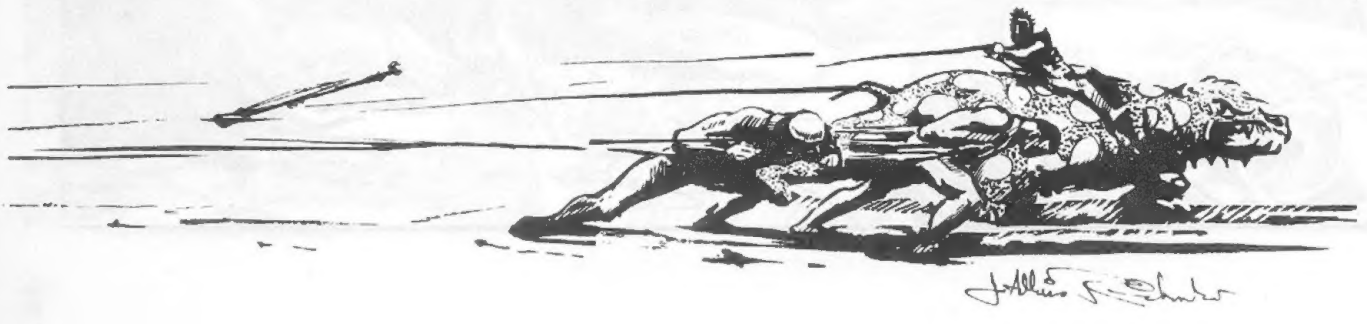


an interview with

ROBERT L. KLINE

Although Robert Kline has had numerous illustrations printed in dozens of different fanzines in his past year and a half in fandom, and has acquired a large number of followers and collectors of his artwork, very few actually know Robert Kline, the person. Only Robert Kline, the artist is known in fandom.

Up until now, that is: Bob Kline is a very likeable, easy going, happily married man towering a full 6' 4" into the sky. As was mentioned in "The Kline's Cover Incident" (pages 16, 17, 18) Bob's wife Missie is "an incredibly lovely lady".

My first contact with Bob was in the form of a letter; the first, last and only letter I've ever received from Bob, in mid-October, 1969. He saw my full page ad for FF on the RB*CC # 66's back cover. Coincidentally, one of Bob's very first illustrations printed in a fanzine was printed on the other side of my ad; as the FRONT cover to RB*CC 66!

Bob liked the ad so much he wrote me a letter, ordering all issues of FF advertised, and invited me to call him up. I did, and we got together the subsequent weekend, and this, really, was the start of a long and happy friendship.

The following is the transcript to my interview with Bob, conducted on the twenty-fifth of April, 1970.

I'd like to thank Bob, not only for editing, laying out, and supervising the production of his interview, but also for all the great times I have had every time I have gone over to his place, and for all the kind favors Bob's done for me since I've known him.

GARY: When did you first become interested in fandom and fanzines, and how did you discover them?

BOB: I first discovered a fanzine in the Collector's Book Store in Hollywood. It was ERB-dom, and it was the first fanzine I had ever seen. It had a color cover painting by Larry Ivie. I was thrilled to death, for here was a full-color reproduction on the cover of a specialized magazine dealing with one of my all time favorite subjects: The works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. The cover painting depicted John Carter attacking a Thark. Inside there were equally marvelous illustrations including a full page Frazetta line drawing of Tarzan killing a lion. The drawing had been intended for one of The Canaveral Press editions, but was not used. That was a truly exciting magazine.

At that time I was collecting EC's and old Galaxy's for Wally Wood's drawings. I guess I'll always like his stuff as much as anyone's. That was it for a long time. I knew that fanzines existed, but I didn't know how big fandom was, or how many people comprised it.

The next time I saw a fanzine was three years later. Its name was Squa Tront, and it was advertised in Mad Magazine's letters column. I was anxious to know more about the EC line so I sent for Squa Tront. I was very impressed with the product. The Al Williamson stuff, the four-color cover and the excellent printing indicated a bright future for this amatuer publication.

My next move was to send some samples to the editor, Jerry Wiest. They consisted of two pages of a strip I've never completed and some roughs for "His Brother's Keeper" (the strip I did for Anomaly # 1). Jerry replied by asking me to collaborate on a strip in the EC style. Even though I was anxious to give it a try, it never happened. Jerry was fortunate enough to get a tremendous volume of professional work, and it was this work (and very little amatuer stuff) which filled the next two issues of Squa Tront.

When Jan Strnad was planning the first issue of Anomaly, he asked Jerry for help in obtaining art and articles and whatever. Jerry gave Jan my samples and my address, and within the next few months Anomaly # 1 appeared along with "His Brother's Keeper" and the first installment of the Robert E. Howard Portfolio.

G. B. Love first saw my work at the 1969 Houston Convention. The "EC Personified" cover on the RB*CC # 66 was the result. Incidentally, the title for the drawing was GB's creation.

GARY: You did that EC-ish cover after your Anomaly # 1 work?

BOB: That Rocket's Blast cover came out about 3 or 4 weeks after Anomaly # 1.

GARY: (Pointing to a large print of the drawing in question): Is that it?

BOB: That's the one. By the way, that's a Ceratosaurus, not a Tyrannosaurus. The Tyrannosaurus didn't have a horn on its nose. I had a lot of fun doing that, and I tried to use as many EC cliches as I could. They included bubbling craters of sulpherous liquids, the small, running lizard, the Pterandons, the volcanoes, the bubble-type space helmets and so forth. I tried to avoid copying any one particular artist's style.

GARY: Didn't someone say you imitated a cover by Wally Wood with that particular drawing?

BOB: No one actually said that, but it was not until after the cover was printed that I saw the cover of Wierd Science # 15 (at least I think that's the one it was). That cover has a remarkable number of elements which also appeared in mine. I was amazed. There was the giant, Tyrannosaurus-like dinosaur attacking a space ship, spacemen in bubble-helmets running in terror, a small lizard dashing for cover, the Pteranodons, the volcanoes, everything. I was actually embarrassed at first. Then I realized I had succeeded in second guessing them better than I had thought.

GARY: Is EC your favorite company?

BOB: In the sense that I like their Science Fiction comics as much or more than any comics I own.

GARY: I think Web of Horror was coming the closest to matching the granduer of the old EC's.

BOB: It's good. I don't like the stories as much, but the artwork is excellent. Wrightson, Kaluta, Reese, and Jones are doing a fine job.

GARY: Do you have any Golden Age comics?

BOB: No, I don't. The only things I

have that I rank with the EC's are some White Indian stuff and Kubert's Tor. I don't have any Captain America, Spysmasher, Green Llama or Purple Turtle. I never have been that interested in the comics of the forties.

GARY: Up to now, what fanzines have featured your artwork?

BOB: Let's see, there's Anomaly 1 and 2, The Collector, the Rocket's Blast Comic Collector, the Fantastic Fanzine, Pow, The Golden Age # 6, Comicology # 4, and I'll Be Damned. In the future there will be stuff in Modern Collector's Review # 4, Bob Juanillo's forthcoming fanzine, Comicazi # 2, Mount to the Stars # 2, the Rocket's Blast Special # 8, the next issue of Star Studded Comics, and Trumpet # 12 will have a six page portfolio illustrating Jack Vance's "The Dying Earth".

GARY: That's some real old stuff, isn't it?

BOB: Tom Reamy has had the drawings for almost a year now.

GARY: Aren't you a little worried that when that art sees print...?

BOB: I don't know. I think the portfolio is still current. Bob Barret, of Squa Tront's "The Frazetta Collector" fame, has said it's my best stuff. At any rate, Tom Reamy deserves a rest. As fine a publication as Trumpet takes a lot of hard work to produce.

GARY: I suppose by the time this interview sees print, most of your artwork we've talked about will already have been published in all the various zines.

BOB: I hope so.

GARY: Currently, what are your favorite fanzines out?

BOB: I like Graphic Story Magazine. It is probably the most polished of the comic oriented fanzines. Trumpet is on GSM's level, but it is devoted to Science Fiction and Fantasy. In the area of the mystic and the occult, top honors should probably go to Mount to the Stars. For general all around greatness I would point to Witzend. And in the catagory of "Best Fanzine Devoted To A Specialized Area Other Than Hog Calling" the winner would have to be Squa Tront. Spa Fon, of course, is a close second in this catagory. Honorable Mentions should definitely go to Anomaly amd Fantastic Fanzine. Oh yes, in the area of advertising, how can we forget the ever present RBCC?

GARY: When did you first become interested in drawing, and what did you learn to draw first?

BOB: The first things I drew were cowboys and indians. I was about three or four years old at that time. Later on I branched out and delt with all sorts of subject matter. I've just recently found a strip I did when I was nine or ten. It involves two test pilots who accidently fly their craft back in time, and wind up fighting dinosaurs. Reeks with originality, doesn't it? The whole thing was done in pencil, and the first two pages were finished in colored pencils. The strip remains unfinished; a great loss to mankind. In fact, I've only managed to complete two strips. They're "His Brother's Keeper" from Anomaly # 1, and "Gorvan The Adventurer" from Anomaly # 2.

GARY: Did you do as much art before you knew there was such a "place" as fandom?

BOB: No, I've done a greater volume since. That is, I've done many more pieces of finished art in a much shorter time as a result of having a "market" for them. I think my style has improved quite a bit in the year I've been active in fandom.

GARY: Do you think that one of the reasons you've turned out so much work is that you've been inspired by knowing that there are so many other people that share a common interest?

BOB: I suppose so. I'm most interested in improving the quality of my work, and seeing it in print. My reward is knowing that someone is really enjoying my stuff.

GARY: Have you ever attended any sort of formal art school?

BOB: I attended the California State College at Long Beach. I was enrolled as an Illustration Major. I was there for two years, and enjoyed most every minute of it. Unfortunately, most of those minutes were spent outside the classroom, and I wound up in the Air Force while trying to escape the draft in January of 1967. The courses I took at Long Beach were all fairly general. They included things like Life Drawing, Two and Three Dimensional Design, Metal and Wood Sculpture, and Rendering.

GARY: What were your grades?

BOB: I got everything from "A"s to "F"s depending on how enthusiastic I was about the class.

GARY: Where and when were you born?

BOB: I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvannia on October 9, 1946.

GARY: And that makes you twenty...

BOB: Three.

GARY: As of...

BOB: Today - April 25th, 1970.

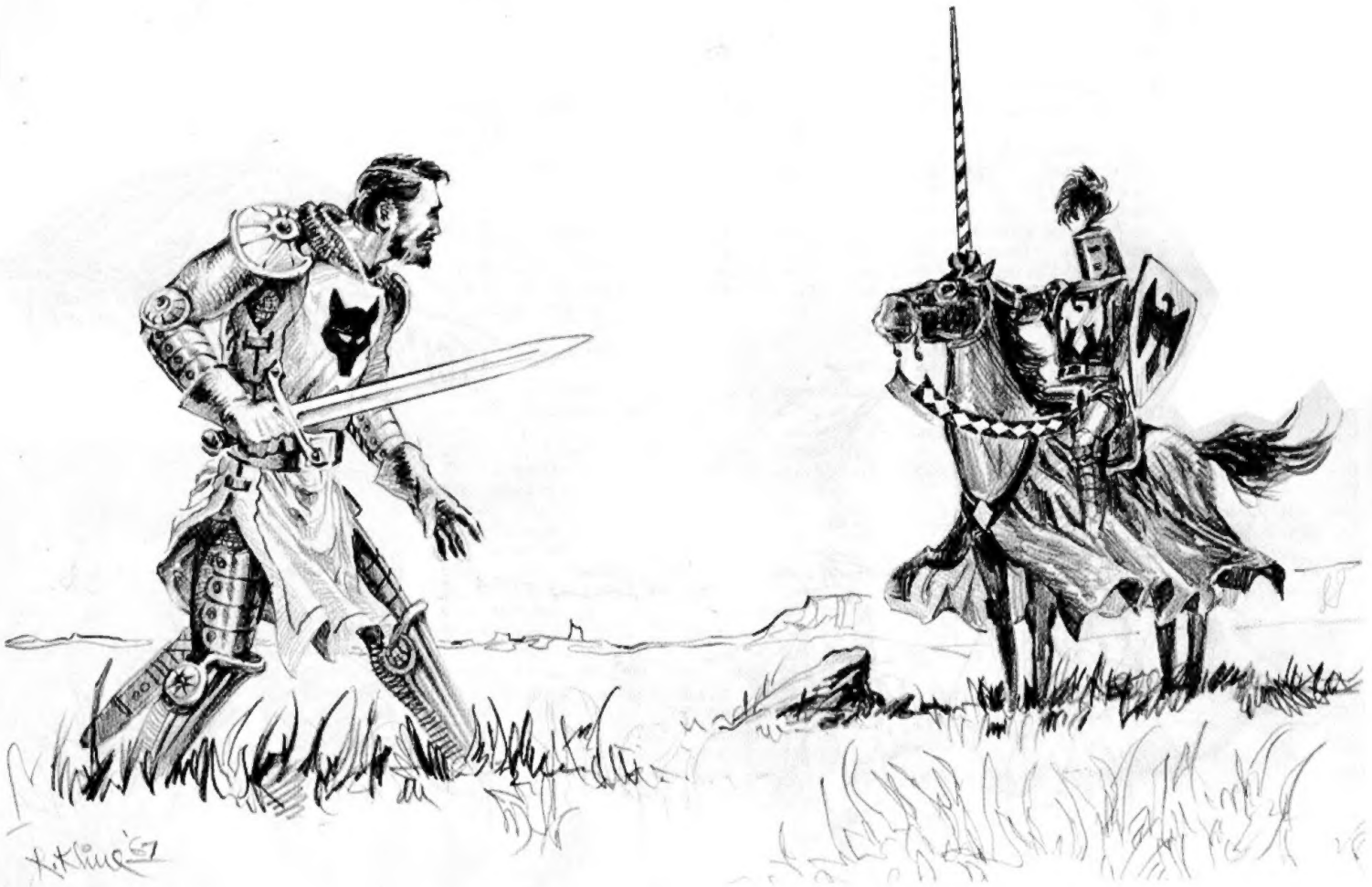
GARY: Yeah, and this interview won't see print until April 25th, 1971...

BOB: Hopefully in time for the convention.

GARY: Yeah, I sure hope so. What do you think of today's comics --- Marvel and National?

BOB: I think they're turning out some good things now and then. As I've said in the past, when I buy a comic magazine, I buy it because I like the illustrations. Both Marvel and National employ my favorite comic book illustrators. I think most of the stuff that is printed today is garbage. but I will almost always purchase comics containing the work of Neal Adams, Steranko, Gil Kane, (when he inks his own stuff), Joe Kubert, Al Williamson, Wally Wood, Jack Kirby or Alex Toth. There are many more whose work is worth far more, in its reproduced form than the 15¢ you and I have to pay for it. It would be pointless to name everyone. I have noticed one thing about National versus Marvel, and Mike Kaluta was the one who helped me realize this. It involves the way in which a story is presented graphically. Marvel adheres to the POW-SMASH Jack Kirby approach to visuals. They give you one fantasticly dynamic panel after the next; no let up. National, on the other hand appears to be an advocate of the Al Williamson technique. Here there is a more natural pacing combining dynamic over-statement with a quiet subtlety. Marvel's illustrators seem to lean toward an emphasis on power-

R. Kline '20



ful stylization, while National's artists adopt a more realistic representation.

GARY: Are there any fields besides comics that particularly interest you?

BOB: Sure. I would like to take a stab at book illustration; pocket books and the like. What fun it would be to illustrate a volume of Conan stories. Animation has always fascinated me. Not just the cartoon variety, but also the Ray Harryhausen kind as seen in Jason And The Argonauts and One Million Years BC. I'm sure I'd get a big kick out of doing some art for any of the Science Fiction pulps; like If or Analog.

GARY: What will you do when you get out of the Air Force?

BOB: I'm not sure right now. Chances are I'll go back to the L.A. area and attend school. I feel more like school now that I've nearly completed my tour with the Air Force.

GARY: Are there any people in the comics field who have influenced your work?

BOB: Probably all of them. That is, all the ones I've been exposed to. Looking back on the work I've done this past year, I can see the traces. There's a little Crandall here, some Williamson there, and, oh yes, there's a little Wood over there. Surely Frank Frazetta has influenced my style just as he seems to have struck a responsive chord in a great many amatuer and professional illustrators today. I've always been impressed with the style of the fellow that draws Turok, Son of Stone. I don't even know who draws that strip. Does anyone out there in fandom know his name?

GARY: Have you seen the recent House of Mystery with the Al Williamson story?

BOB: Yes. I understand Mike Kaluta had a hand in that. Apparently he worked with Al on the layouts and pencils, or at least that's the way I heard it. It was a beautiful piece of work, and reminded me quite a bit of the old EC Incredible Science Fiction stuff. It had many of the touches of stories like "Food For Thought", even though it was not as tightly rendered.

GARY: What kind of comics do you collect now?

BOB: Again, it depends entirely on who's doing the art.

GARY: You collect the EC's, don't you?

BOB: Yes.

GARY: What are your favorite EC titles?

BOB: The Science Fiction stuff, is by far, the best. Those titles? Wierd Science, Wierd Fantasy, Wierd Science - Fantasy (when the two combined), and Incredible Science Fiction (when the Code fell upon EC). I tend to stear clear of the horror and crime comics. They really were too gristly for my taste. I do have a few of them, but I can't look at them too often. My other favorites are Aces High, Frontline Combat, Valor, and Two - Fisted Tales.

GARY: Who's your topmost, super favorite artist today --- out of everyone?

BOB: There's no doubt: Frank Frazetta.

GARY: Gee, I thought you were gonna' say Herb Trimpe.

BOB: Well, he's good too, but Frazetta is the best. Frazetta elicits a gut reaction with his work. You feel it emotionally. I can't say that about too many other illustrators. Most of Frazetta's imitators go after his style, his technique. This is a mistake, for Frazetta's greatest strengths are in his flowing compositions and his powerful flare for the dramatic. Granted, his draftmanship is probably better than

anyone else's in the field. This fact is only incidental to the greater aesthetic wonders he creates with color and highly contrasting values of light and dark.

GARY: What artists come close to matching his art in pure quality?

BOB: Neal Adams comes close, and his approach is an entirely different one. Jim Steranko's work is very powerful and highly stylized and I like it very much. In addition to these men, there are a number whose work is more similar to Frazetta's. However, I feel the Frazetta imitators are missing the boat by not developing a style that is truly their own.

GARY: Could you explain a little of the technique you use in your work?

BOB: Typically I will employ the following steps: I'll begin an illustration with a full-size rough layout on tracing paper. From this I will develop a detailed comprehensive pencil drawing by drawing over the first rough on a series of tracing paper overlays. This gives me an opportunity to move the figures around, and determine the best positioning for each. When the final pencil drawing is completed, it generally includes all the lights and darks, details and textures. I will then make a simple line tracing of the final using blue pencil. The back of the blue pencil tracing is then covered with graphite. This provides a carbon paper effect and the drawing can then be traced into a sheet of illustration board. When this step is completed, there is a copy of the original drawing on a clean surface free from erasures and unneeded pencil marks. The comprehensive is then used for reference in rendering the finished art.

GARY: I've never heard of an artist drawing on tracing paper, and redoing it and revising it like that.

BOB: It's not uncommon. I understand John Fantucchio uses a similar technique.

GARY: If you landed a job, say, at Marvel or National, would you use the same technique in comic strips?

BOB: If I were doing comics on a regular basis, I would probably work on a single surface. It would depend somewhat on the complexity of the panel, and I think the more difficult ones would require at least some preliminary work.

GARY: What materials do you generally use in your artwork?

BOB: Pelikan waterproof drawing ink. Winsor & Newton series 7 sable hair brushes ranging in size from 00 to 5. Winsor & Newton Designer Colors. Hot Press illustration board. Bienfang layout and design vellum.

GARY: Gee, I thought you'd be a little different and use a weasel tail, or something...

BOB: Well, I use a toothpick on most of my line work. I just dip it right into the ink there.

GARY: Are you kidding?

BOB: No.

GARY: Well, that's different enough.

BOB: I also use a large variety of shading sheets. Oh yes, and Q-tips for filling in the blacks.

GARY: How's your working speed?

BOB: Not bad if I'd just get to work. It's not the speed at which you work, but the procrastination between sessions on the board. I think the largest problem involving working speed is simply getting down to drawing. I would wager most painters and illustrators would agree with me.

GARY: I guess you have a lot of trouble judging how fast you work with the Air Force chopping up your schedule.

RK

BOB: Yes, if they would just let me devote my time to the more important things.

GARY: What time in the day do you prefer to work?

BOB: Whenever I get the urge to create. It can happen any time, and that's why I would like to be free to work during any hour of the day. As it is there are only about four hours during the weekdays when I'm physically free to work. It's a miracle when I feel truly inspired during those four hours.

GARY: Whom do you consider to be the best fan artist?

BOB: Well, first of all, it's quite difficult to determine who is and who is not a fan artist. However, from among those who are generally accepted as fan artists I would pick Rich Corben. I believe him to be the most creative and original of the amatuer Science Fiction and Fantasy illustrators. The others whose work impresses me the most are George Barr, Steve Fabian, John Fantucchio, John Adkins Richardson, Dave Cockrum, Don Newton, and Bob Juanillo. I don't expect that list to really suprise anyone since the very best people stand out rather obviously.

GARY: What comic company do you think is the best right now?

BOB: I think the things that National are doing are the most inventive. As I said before, most of today's comics are garbage, but the best of the good stuff seems to be coming from National. Marvel and Stan Lee seem to be relying too much on formulas. The experimentation is taking place at National. The other comic companies, Dell, Gold Key and Charlton, are turning out the same, old tired stuff they always have. Ooops, I almost forgot James Warren. He's another experimentor. His greatest service is supplying a professional vehicle for up-and-coming comic illustrators and cover artists. As a result, most of the stuff he publishes lacks a certain polish.

GARY: What, in your opinion, was the best all-time strip ever published?

BOB: My answer to that question has to be limited to the scope of my experience and my tender 23 years. Many of the really great newspaper strips were printed before my time, so I've only been able to see that stuff which has been reprinted. Of those old strips I really enjoy Prince Valiant, Hogarth's Tarzan, and Raymond's Flash Gordon. Currently my favorite strips include Pogo, Peanuts, and B.C.

Of all the comic book art I've seen, the stories that stand out most in my mind include Frazetta's Thunda, the Frazetta-Williamson (plus whoever) EC Science Fiction stories, Russ Manning's Magnus, Kubert's Tor, Wally Wood's EC stuff, and Neal Adams' Deadman and X-Men stories. Needless to say, there's a lot more stuff that would fit right in there, but let's not turn this into a comic collector's index.

GARY: Which writers do you prefer in comics today?

BOB: I like Archie Goodwin's stories. I think Denny O'Neil's Green Lantern/Green Arrow stories have been very successful. Neal Adams writes very entertaining stories, and so does Jack Kirby. And good old prolific Roy Thomas can't be denied recognition. He's probably done as much for comics, as they relate to fandom, as any writer currently on the scene. As I mentioned before, Stan Lee seems to be in a rut, but once he was the most innovative comic book writer you could find. Out of the past come the ghosts of Harvey Kurtzman and Al Feldstein. They're still connected with the graphic story, but they'll probably never equal the fabulous things they did for the Entertaining Comics line in the early fifties.

GARY: Whose inking in comics do you especially like?

BOB: Wally Wood, Tom Palmer, Joe Sinnott, Dan Adkins and a host of others.

GARY: What is it that appeals to you most in a fanzine? What do you look for the most in a zine?

BOB: I'm most interested in good artwork involved with interesting strips and stories. I love to find humor in fanzines, and not just the biting, heavy satire.

GARY: What did you think of Wally Wood's Pipsqueak Papers?

BOB: That's a good example. That strip was just the type of light hearted thing I would like to see more of. It was uniquely Wally Wood, just as Vaughn Bode's stories cannot be compared with anyone elses. Fanzines should definitely exist so that individuals can take their own ideas and fully realize them. There doesn't seem to be much valdity in imitating that which already exists in professional magazines. Fanzines must support originality and damn imitation.

GARY: To get off the subject for a sec... Are you an only child?

BOB: No I have a sister. She paints. Doesn't give a damn about comic books, but she does paint.

GARY: What kind of painting does she do?

BOB: Flowers, Owls, Kite-flying Hippies. She employs a variety of techniques. She uses acrylics like cake frosting, and creates beautiful, stylized flower arrangements. She uses line and wash to create foggy cats of colored mist. She makes jewelry, clothes, and monumental candles that resemble miniature segments of the mountains in the painted desert. Quite an accomplished young lady.

GARY: What's her name?

BOB: Pat Kline, soon to be Pat Martinet. She's marrying a famous citrus magnate who shall remain nameless.

GARY: Is she older or younger than you?

BOB: 21.

GARY: And what are your plans for the future?

BOB: I haven't come up with any concrete ones yet, but I'm sure I'll have a better idea closer to January 15th. I'll either try to land a job or go back to school.

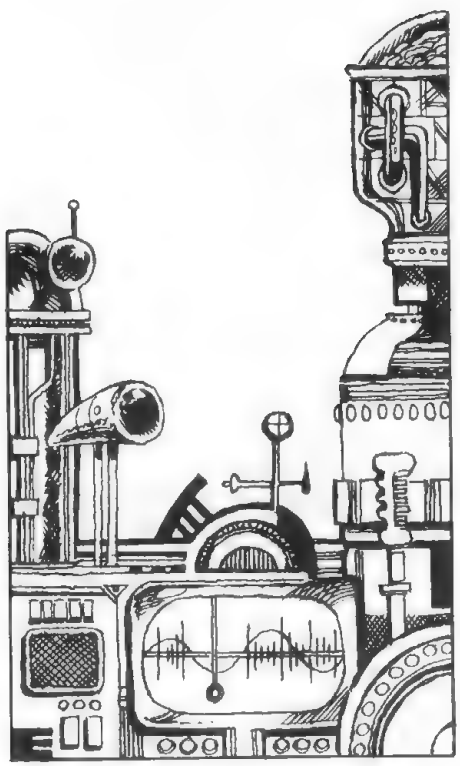
GARY: Well, I guess that's it then.

BOB: Good, let's play it back. I want to hear what I sound like.

GARY: The whole thing...?

a true account of the strange gafiation of robert kline

by ladislov prosnaikl



Reporter's Note: Since I was probably one of the closest friends of the now departed Robert Kline, I was not suprised when Gary Groth asked that I write a few words concerning his recent gafiation. I'm sure the transcript that follows shortly will help explain his mysterious disappearance.

When I received the commision from Mr. Groth, I decided to do a little research. My first thought was to touch base with Mrs. Kline. After my first cup of coffee and Mrs. Kline's fifth tequilla and pomegranate juice I felt it was time to get to the point. I asked her when she had last seen Bob. Her reply was that she hadn't seen her husband in over three weeks, and she was sure she knew as little of her husband's whereabouts as anyone in fandom. Mrs. Kline then produced a small rectangular package which she said she had found in her mail box just that morning. She had been afraid to open it alone.

There was no postmark on the package, and the stamps bore no recognizable symbols, idiograms or pictures. Somehow, however, we both knew that within the plain, brown cover was a clue.

We could not have asked for more of a clue. It was a tape cassette. This then is the true account, in his own words, of how it came to pass that Robert Kline left active fandom:

It all began on a beautiful summer day in suburban Alexandria, Virginia. The sun had positioned itself at about ten-thirty, and the birds were filling the warm air with their songs. As I stepped onto the balcony of my sixth floor apartment, my eyes fastened on a gray, misty smear blemishing the horizon. Why, on such a perfectly cloudless day, was this growing blotch allowed to invade the clear blue of the August skies? I could only guess.

There did seem to be something premeditated about that neutral colored vapor. There was something that reeked of the man-made, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

Then I heard it. A very quiet, almost inaudible sound at first. But building, slowly building. I stood transfixed. The palms of my hands began to dampen as the hairs at the back of my neck stood erect. It struck me that this was not your ordinary, noisy, gray cloud.

And then, BANG! I was catapulted from the relative security of my concrete slab balcony, and found myself plummeting toward that sinister mist. The speed of my flight was great. My eyes could not remain open against the wind, and before another thought of the cloud could enter my mind, the silent blackness of unconsciousness enveloped me.

When I awoke, it was to the busy hum of machinery and the stabbing glare of a thousand brilliant lights. I was refreshed, and felt the urge to leap to my feet for some vigorous calisthenics. It was then that I became aware of the chromium bands encircling my wrists, ankles and abdomen. I had been strapped, Frankenstein Monster-like, to some kind of operating table. Straight above my head the "thousand brilliant lights" converged to create a single, burning eye-piercer. I turned my head to the side. Trying to blot out the glare, I squeezed my eyelids shut with every facial muscle at my command. All my attempts did little good until...

"All your attempts will do little good, spineless earthworm."

The voice was scratchy, and sounded like a wire brush on stainless steel. I had thought I was alone, and the prescence of another being shed new light on the situation. As if one was needed.

"Why am I here?" I queried.

"I will ask the questions," responded the unseen alien. With that, the ultra brilliance was eclipsed by an inky blackness. As my eyes gradually adjusted themselves to the new dimness I was able to discern more of my surroundings. The first things I saw were the huge and nameless devices that produced those eerie hummings. They were wonderful machineries; fully capable of staggering the limitless imaginations of the most creative advertising copy writer. Dazzling colors and fantastic florescences danced across their facades. This was obviously the heart of some amazing interstellar craft outfitted to traverse the universe.

"As you can see, you are being held guest aboard an amazing interstellar craft outfitted to traverse the universe. Of course, we had to disguise the ship as a cumulo-nimbus formation for the purpose of ensnaring you."

This time the voice surely came from behind me, and I realized I why was unable to see the creature addressing me.

"Just as I suspected," I said under my breath.

"I'll have none of your under-the-breath mutterings, you earthless spineworm," my faceless captor warned. "As I was saying, you are being held guest, and it is our wish that you come to no harm. So, if you please, do not do anything that might force me to use this ingenious, solar-charged ray blaster developed by we Tzarchrans for dealing with the likes of you, you wormless earthspine."

And I found myself staring down the barrel of an unbelievable weapon. The polished and intricate pistol was being clutched by an oily brown tentacle which snaked out of sight over my left shoulder. I was getting a bit curious as to the appearance of my adversary.

"I suppose you are getting a bit curious as to the appearance of your adversary. Well, wait no longer spineless wormearth,"" and he stepped into view.

It was all I could do to keep my lunch down. Such ghastliness was beyond all imagining. I could not begin to describe the obscenity of that abomination. Mere words cannot reveal one tenth the revulsion any human being would suffer upon glimpsing that awful ugliness. He looked a lot like a rotting octopus placed atop a turned-inside-out hippopotamus. Get the picture?

"Now that you can see the sort of high level intelligence that has you in its power, perhaps you will curb your insolent tongue." The voice seemed to come from a vibrating orifice placed squarely in the middle of my grisly guardian. Across the opening were strung a number of organic filaments. These filaments were apparently responsible for the beast's communicative abilities. "We have spared no expense in capturing you," he went on. "This is the latest model amazing interstellar craft available. With radio, heater and white-side prosthogenerators, the price tag is just under 15,476,000,000 United States/Earth dollars. Impressive, no?"

Experience had taught me not to reply.

"We have been watching you for a long time. I don't mind saying it has been a difficult task, but we have now achieved our long-sought-after goal.

Here the loathesome being paused for dramatic effect, and breathed deeply. After a short, subtle belch he continued.

"We have obtained a truly perfect example."

"What do you mean, perfect?"

"Silence! Several centuries ago, earth-time, we captured one of the greatest minds your planet ever produced. Even now he is on display at the Intergalactic Hall of Universally Illuminative Knowledge.

"Probably one of the finest exhibits I ever managed to take alive. His name was Leonardy something-or-other.

"My superiors were disappointed in this feat in only one way. I did not bring back an example to show the full latitude of human development. Here, indeed, was a representative of the top end of mankind's evolution as a species, but what about the other end?

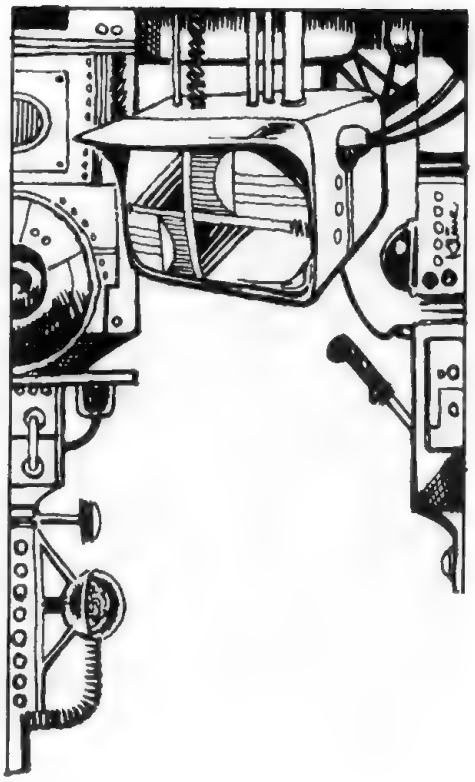
"In short, after years of observation, we have discovered in you exactly what we need. A specimen of the lowest level of human development."

"Gee whiz..." was all I could say.

And the hum of the machinery seemed to increase imperceptibly.

Closing Reporter's Note: And that was all that had been recorded on the cassette. We are left with our own speculations as to what happened next. I, for one, pray that the loathesome beast's superior finds Mr. Kline's performance level slightly higher than worst in at least one area of human endeavor. Then, perhaps he would be allowed to return to our midst.

Incidentally, if you would like an entirely different view of why Robert Kline folded his tents and went skulking off into the night, get Anomaly # 3. Send one dollar to Jan S. Strnad, 1340 North Hillside # 4, Wichita, Kansas 67214.



(Editor's Note: Created by Jim Wilson, the "FF CONTROL" theme will be a regular series of satires contained in all future issues of FF. This series is meant as light entertainment, and good, fun fannish fiction. Jim Wilson is the creator/co creator of FF's newest innovative idea in the field of graphic excitement: The Guardsmen of Infinity. All incidents in this story are basically true, with the exception of the painting by Bob Kline. No such painting exists, therefore no such painting was ever stolen. All the smaller incidents have been derived from true-to-life incidents, and all names contained herein are either true as they appear, or are true, but distorted.

And, no, even we aren't going to try to pawn off this story as the real reason TGOI is so late! - Gary)

PART ONE:

"A SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCE"

The silence was almost a living entity.

Not a cricket chirped, not a tire squeeled; the silence was total. It was almost as if all of Virginia was commemorating the events that transpired at the towering structure at 7263 Evanston Road, Springfield Virginia, that night.

The security guards had been called away momentarily as one of the back doors slid open with a metalic whirr, and a figure handed a black briefcase to another figure standing in the shadows. The recipient of the case opened it briefly to examine its contents and then satisfied, handed the figure at the door a near mint copy of All Winners # 18, then was gone; as swiftly and as silently as he had arrived.

Morning came; it was as if nothing happened. The personel were busy with their varied duties as always; the photostat machine hummed; the offset presses clattered, processing countless copies of FF CONTROL MAGAZINES that would soon be automatically collated, saddle-stitched, and mailed to buyers throughout the entire free world. It was a normal, quiet, routine day at FF Control.

The nerve center of the entire mammoth complex - Gary Groth's plush office buzzed with activity like a beehive. Groth's own desk was piled so high with work that the only sign that he was behind it was a series of sporadic chuckles. Finally, Groth stopped laughing and threw down Howard Rasberry's latest Comic Price List he was reading for laughs, got up and walked to his private elevator.

He pressed the touchplate marked "TGOI Section". He had to tell Wilson the good news in person.

The elevator stopped, and deposited Groth into a corridor that was every bit as active as the floor he'd just left. The only difference was a shimmering wall design; a silvery galaxy with a large, eight pointed star in its center. He walked down the corridor, looking in the various offices, and finally came to Wilson's door, which opened for him automatically. The secratary near the door locked up momentarily as he went in.

Groth's first impression was that the suite was a den rather than an office. Soft carpet covered the polished chronium-steel floor. The lighting was extremely low-key. Soft music issued forth from stereo speakers built into the walls. Groth looked at Wilson's cluttered desk. Besides Wilson's blue Electric IBM, there were two photographs in frames on the desk. The photos were of two strikingly beautiful women; one with long auburn hair, the other with short, honey blond hair. An inscription on the frame of the latter bore the cryptic single name "Owen". Groth wondered who in the devil they were; they both looked too young for either of them to be his mother, and they were certainly too old to be his girl friends. Groth's train of thought was broken by the sound of the automatic door, which opened once more.

Wilson walked in, engaged in conversation with Carter Scholz, one of the TGOI staffers. Wilson was talking. "Carter, I like to keep an open mind, but the Entropy Theory just keeps gnawing on my logic. The Steady State Theory just seems much more applicable, to the tangent function of the universe. Of course, this would nullify any possible theological implacations, but..."

"Jim, you obviously fail to accept the findings of Asimov. The Entropy Theory is, in the long run, the only plausible one. The inescapable proof of the theory --- the nuetron stars --- partially foreshadow the result of Entropy. I'm only speaking theoretic-

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-Gary

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ally, of course..."

Groth shook his head. "I'll never understand those SF writers", he thought.

"Good news", Groth said. "I just got a batch of art from Robert Kline yesterday, and in it was the cover painting for TGOI # 1!"

"Well, I'll be!" Wilson exclaimed. "Let's go see it. Carter, stay up here and keep things running smoothly. Tell Crawford I want re-writes of the optical sequences in scenes 116 and 117 of TGOI # 18, and for heavens sakes, tell Sharon to keep those artists out of my office! I must get a hundred requests a day to assign them TGOI stories. Yesterday, one even threatened to commit suicide if I didn't let him do an ish. I told him Bill Cantey keeps his gun collection downstairs, and that's the last I saw of him. C'mon, Gary."

"Man", Groth thought. "Jim's becoming almost as big a hard-headed editor-type as I am." They headed back to the main complex.

In the sub-basement of the FF Control Complex, Groth and Wilson passed through an intricate maze of sinister alarm devices, and finally arrived in front of the Master Vault, where Groth kept all of his original manuscripts and artwork. Upon reciting a voice-code key sequence, various relays clicked closed and the massive metal door opened for Groth. Inside, chrome-steel cabinets and files lined the walls. Groth walked over to one of the cabinets, opened it, looked inside, then looked again. With a look of disbelief, Groth flipped through the illustration boards in the cabinet.

Groth yelped. "It's gone! Impossible!" He began perspiring; Wilson already was.

The same thought occured to both of them. They ran out of the vault at the same instant, headed for the elevator.

PART TWO:

"HE'S NOT VERY TALKATIVE"

"Okay", Groth said. "I've had Cantey pulled off his last assignment, and now he and his men are combing the building. Gordon Matthews and Pat Janson are investigating the vault system."

"You and I had better go see Bob Kline", Wilson said. "See if he can give us some kinda' lead on this."

"Yeah. Right. Wait a minute; I'd better put Crawford in command while we're gone."

"Tom? What about Dr Decker? I thought he was on duty here this month?"

"He's defending himself against a libel suit in court. Seems Charles Korbas finally got fed up with Doc's satires on him."

"I knew it. Knowing Korbas, though, Doc'll come out okay."

Groth and Wilson stepped up on Robert Kline's front doorstep; Groth rang the bell. After a moment, the door opened, and an incredibly lovely lady let them in. "She must be Missie Kline", Wilson thought. "Kline's a lucky devil".

"Hi, Gary", she said. "Who's your friend here?"

"Creator of the Guardsmen of Infinity", Groth said.

"Oh, you're Jim...Jim..."

"Wilson", Wilson finished. "Howdy".

"Bob's in here", she said, walking through the living room. Wilson looked at the paintings on the walls. One, a panoramic view of a cosmonaut aiming a blaster at an oncoming lizard-like creature from behind a wrecked spaceship particularly impressed him. Finally they were led into a room filled with art supplies, and inhabited by a man in his early twenties, who sat at a small table inking a drawing. He looked up as Groth and Wilson walked in.

"Hi, Gary", he said.

"Hello, Bob", Groth replied. "This is Jim Wilson, director of the TGOI department."

"Jim", Kline said, extending his hand to Wilson, who pumped it amiably. "I sent in my cover to Control yesterday -- how'd you like it?"

"That's what we came about, Bob", Groth said. "It's been stolen! Do you turn down many requests for art? We thought..."

Missie Kline laughed, and walked over to a large box on a shelf. She dumped its contents into a nearby coffee table. That box held what looked like thousands of letters. Wilson whistled.

"Think they'll be any help?" Kline asked, grinning.

Mrs. Kline laughed also, and said, "I'll leave you to your...er...work. I have to go check on Tommy."

Kline looked thoughtful for a moment. "One thing, though. No editor, no matter how ignorant, would dare to print that cover; we'd spot it in a minute. So..."

Wilson took it up. "That means whoever stole the cover did it for only one logical reason: TO KEEP TGOI FROM COMING OUT!"

Groth said, "That answers why. Now all we need to know is who and how."

"We can handle that one", Wilson said. "Call Control. See what Cantey's come up with."

Groth reached for his pocket communicator just as it started 'beeping'. He took it out, raised the antenna grid. "Groth here."

"Gary? Cantey here. Got a lead. Matthews told me the vault hadn't been broken into; whoever got in there knew just how it was done. So I rounded up all the operatives connected with the vault and ran 'em through a routine security check. Turned out one of 'em, guy named Cantonty, had something to hide. The original Steranko cover from FF # 10! Kline's cover wasn't there, but this bum was the thief alright."

"Good", Groth said. "We'll be right over. Start interrogating him. Total priority."

Groth sat in his office, flipping paper clips. What the devil was taking Cantey so long? It was after 3 AM! A few minutes later, Cantey walked in, sweating.

"Anything?" Groth asked hopefully.

"I interrogated that lowlife creep for five hours", Cantey said disgustedly. "Absolutely nothing."

"Well, that tears it", Groth said. "We're up the creek for sure."

"Without a paddle", Cantey added.

"Without even a canoe", Groth said flatly. "Without that cover, we can't go to print. I suppose we'll just have to send the readers a progress report saying they're just gonna' havta' hold on 'till we can get a substitute cover. I'd better talk to Wilson."

PART THREE:

"A BIT OF LOGIC"

When Groth walked into Wilson's office, he expected to see him staring into space worrying about TGOI. Instead he was busy writing the text to the next issue of the FF Newsroom. He looked up. "Hey, Gary. Anything?"

"Not a thing. Looks like we haven't anything to go on. I could order an all-out raid on everyone remotely connected with TGOI, but..."

"No use in getting everybody riled up yet", said Wilson. "B'sides, it won't help our image any to admit we had a traitor for a vault guard. Let's wait 'till morning; I'll see if I caint come up with something."

Groth agreed and left. Wilson walked over to another part of his huge office, opened a small drink cooler, and started mixing. If he was going to dope this thing out, he'd need a little stimulant.

It was 6 the next morning. Groth awoke with a start, forcing himself to full conciousness. He remembered his talk with Wilson the night before, and wanted to see him as soon as possible to see if he had any ideas.

He walked into Wilson's office. It looked exactly the same, except that Wilson was leaning back in his executive chair sipping on his favorite drink; a cold, George-style Mint Julep. From the empty glasses on a tray near the desk, it was his fifth. Near Wilson's desk, a secratary was typing up the FF*N text he'd written hours before. He smiled broadly when he saw Groth, and straightened up in his chair. "Hiya, Gar! Hey, I've taken care'a everything. Now all y'all gotta do is jus' relax. An' don't worry, I ain't left anything to chance."

Groth smiled inwardly. The return of Wilson's Georgia accent, which he usually kept under control, meant he'd been tanking up all night. But Wilson wasn't one to get loaded; with him, a few drinks slowed his physical reflexes down to near-nothingness and made his already sharp mind like a razor. Apparently, he'd solved the TGOI problem. But how...

Groth's train of thought was interrupted by Tom Crawford, who came in by Wilson's private elevator. "Jim, I've got the security force you wanted ready. Shall I post them?"

"Naw, les wait awhile. Hay, Sharon. Y'got that layout typed up yet?"

"I've just finished it, Luv", she said.

"Good. Take it downstairs to the printer an' get it fixed up and sent out."

"Jim", Groth said, "are you sure you know what you're doing?"

"Now, Gary, I done said fer ya not to worry 'bout a thing. Yew have enough bother gettin' FF edited. Yew jes' relax. I guarentee that dad-burn cover'll be right on this here desk within 24 hours."

"I guess he knows what he's doing", Groth thought, as he walked out, chuckling.

Groth was editing an article at the time the general alarm started bleeping. He immediately jumped up and looked at the trouble board. VAULT! he thought as he ran out.

On his way down he thought, "Hey! It's been nearly 24 hours; Wilson's plan must've worked! It better have...!"

When he got to the vault corridor, it was in an absolute uproar. Dozens of employees had gathered round where two people were having a knockdown dragout fight! By the time Groth got to them it was over, Wilson stood laughing, holding a hammer lock and a half nelson on some, still unidentified person, who was struggling to get loose. Two security guards rushed in and relieved Wilson.

Groth looked at the struggling figure, but couldn't for the life of him tell who it was; he'd never seen the intruder before.

Then someone spoke up: "Hey, I know him! That's the editor...er, former editor of Oddballs!"

Then Groth placed him; it was the editor of a long-defunct fanzine he'd once knocked in an FF Newsroom Review.

"Yes, I am", the panting figure yelled. "I had to get you, Groth; that damned review of yours put me out of business. I could have milked God-knows-how-many fans for 50¢ and given them 1¢ worth of material. But no; you and Wilson there came along and warned everybody off. I had to get back at you, Groth!"

Groth looked stunned; the figure was a pitiful sight; throwing a temper tantrum; frothing at the mouth. Wilson looked disgusted. Cantey looked disgusted. "Bill --- you and Jim take a skimmer to this --- person's --- address and recover our Kline painting." Groth said. "Guards -- throw this whimpering dolt out of the building."

Just as Wilson had predicted, the TGOI cover was on his desk, safe and sound. He sat there and admired it for hours before Groth finally got all the loose ends tied up. Finally, Groth came walking into Wilson's office.

"Okay, Jim, I'll admit it. You've done it again. But tell me: How did you get him to come back to the vault? And don't give me that bit about the crimminal returning the scene of the crime."

"Elementary", Wilson laughed. "Look at the FF Newsroom there."

Groth picked up the FF*N from a nearby coffee table. The headline read:

TGOI GOES OUT ON SCHEDULE

Sabotage Attempt Foiled

Replacement Cover Found

Groth looked puzzled. "But this was sent out yesterday...how did you know...?"

"I didn't", Wilson said, beaming. "For some reason, when an editor gets blasted in a 'zine review, he keeps buying the zine that contained that review. I knew that whoever had a grudge against us would be reading that issue of the FF*N....but then, I guess they would anyway, since our circulation is 32,000... anyway, when the culprit saw that headline, I thought he'd try the same trick again. So I set up a little trap for him."

Groth nodded. "Yeah. Just goes to show what a man can do if he puts his mind to it. But now, we'd better get this cover downstairs to the printer. Deadline's tomorrow, y'know."

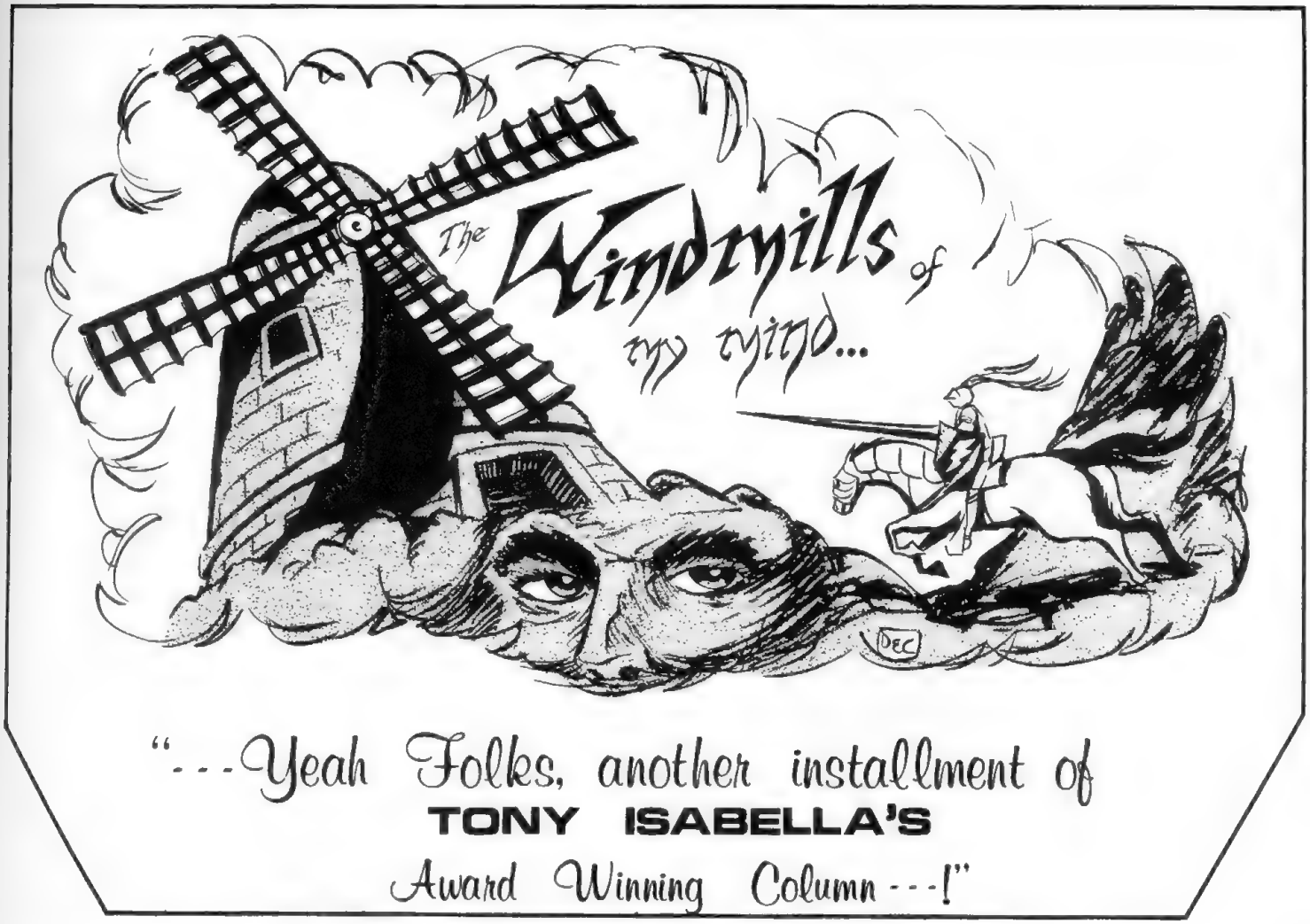
"Mmmm. I'll go with you. It'll be a pleasure to watch those copies roll from the presses." Wilson's eyes narrowed. "Gary...I want a couple gratis copies sent to a couple people down in Georgia."

"Ah ha!" Groth said. "Would those happen to be going to the people in those two pictures on your desk? And who are they, anyway?"

"Mentors", Wilson replied.

And they walked out of the office.

End



"...Yeah Folks, another installment of
TONY ISABELLA'S
Award Winning Column---!"

Guess what, Gary? This column is going to be a particularly nasty one. You wouldn't believe what I had to go through getting mad enough to write it. Even after reading Vampirella and making a special effort to study the work of one Jack Sparling, I wasn't quite ready. I don't think I would have made it without the combined efforts of nine persons who will remain unidentified, though I shall verbally lynch them in a little while. They did the trick.

I had promised Dirk Burhans that I would rap some about that up-and-coming Berni Wrightson, but I'll have to put that off 'til next issue when I revert to my usually good-natured self. I will say that I have the same regard for Wrightson that I have for our own Barry Smith, who gets better with every new job and who ranks as one of the nine professional artists I would most like to work with. Be here next issue when I publicly beg Mr. Smith to do one short story that is being especially written for his style for the upcoming, bi-monthly, BEWARE THE CREEPER MAGAZINE.

By the way, Paul Puzzangherra, you don't have to address your letters to "Almighty Master Isabella". I will also answer to any number of lesser titles and incantations. Groth gets off with an uncomplicated "Lord and Master". Actually, you'll find me a very friendly sort, though I can get vicious on occasions. Like right now. Here I am making small talk. All to throw you off guard so you'll be totally unprepared when I toss a few bricks at...

THE ALLEY AWARDS

Mark Hanerfeld is probably a wonderful and trusted person. Despite its lateness, The Comic Reader remains an excellent newszine. Also, Mark has singlehandedly kept the Alley Awards from becoming nothing more than memory for three years now. Neither of these achievements, notable though they may be, negates the fact that the Alleys are being handled in an inept manner.

I spent a good week going through a year's collection of what amounted to over 500 comic magazines in order to mark my favorites on this years ballot. Hell, I defy you to find 500 people spending that much time on a presidential ballot. It could be that the tremendous amount of time involved is keeping some fans from exercising their yearly privilege to show graphically what they liked. The cumbersome ballot itself is reason enough to refrain from voting, even without mentioning that several of the catagories don't even make sense.

Something must be done to remove this burden from the voters. I suggest that Mark open the floor for the nomination of people to the 1970 Alleys Nominating Board. An official nomination could be five signatures and the consent of the nominee. Naturally, every group of fans are going to nominate their local fan hero. Fine. From the hundred or so nominees, about twenty-five would be elected to the Board on an early summer ballot.

The members of the board would then select five nominees from the candidates in each catagory, rating them first, second, third etc. A "No Award" vote would be made, as well as selecting less than five candidates in any catagory. The Chairman of the Board (to be chosen by the board members) would than tally the board ballots on a point system (5 for the first, etc.) The five leading nominees would be designated the official nominees and be listed on the ballot. The possibility of a write-in would be clearly provided for on the new ballot, which I feel could speed up the process of tallying by as much as 50% or more.

Of course, to facilitate the job of the Nominating Board, the number of catagories would have to be drastically reduced. Awards for best comic magazines

should be lumped under one catagory ---- BEST COMIC MAGAZINE. Considering how few titles there are that fit the present catagories, this would make competition a bit keener. And it would also eliminate the problem of titles that fit into two or three catagories. Lois Lane is both an Adventure hero(ine) title and a romamce title. The constant prescence of Superman also makes it a costumed hero title. And what about Mike Sekowsky's new book, Manhunter 2700? From its description, we could consider it an SF title, a western title, and a humor title. ((Note: Tony wrote this article before Manhunter 2700 made its debut, in National's SHOWCASE 91 - Gary)). If he wears a costume, the Alleys have had it! (I hate to mention that by definition of the word "costume", even Sgt. Fury could be considered a costumed hero. Ripped shirt and all!)

If we are going to break up the best story catagory into two catagories by length, we'd might as well do it right. I suggest three catagories --- Best Novel, Best Novelet, and Best Short Story. Exactly what length would constitute a novel, novelet and short story could then be decided each year by the board when it elects its chairman. This gives a good short story a chance of recognition it might never receive when judged with the longer novelets.

With only five costumed hero titles now being published, that catagory is rather silly. I suggest it be reduced to simply Best Lead Character. Any member of a group could be considered a lead character if that group had its own strip. The catagories of Best Supporting Character and Best Villain would remain the same. They are remarkably concise considering the rest of the Alleys Ballot. Ditto the awards for Best Editor, Best Writer, Best Pencil Artist, Best Inking Artist, Best Cover, Best Fan Writer, And Best Fan Artist. The Hall of Fame Award would also remain, but its qualifications would be changed. No strip still being published and done by the person(s) listed with the strip would be eligible. (Example: The Fantastic Four by Lee and Romita would not be eligible. Spiderman by Lee and Ditko would be eligible).

Since very few people see all the newspaper strips now being produced unless they work for a newspaper, that entire catagory is useless. I suggest that newspaper strips be considered under the new catagory of Special Merit Award. Nearly anything not covered in another catagory could be eligible here --- prozines, conventions, books on comics, special improvement on a writer—artist team -- anything.

Such reductions would leave is with a very workable ballot of 17 catagories where there are now 27:

1. Best Comic Magazine
2. Best Editor
3. Best Writer
4. Best Pencil Artist
5. Best Inking Artist
6. Best Cover
7. Best Novel
8. Best Novelet
9. Best Short Story
10. Best Lead Character
11. Best Supporting Character
12. Best Villain
13. Hall of Fame Award
14. Best Fanzine
15. Best Fan Writer
16. Best Fan Artist
17. Special Merit Award

The ballots would then be tallied by an official Alley Tally Board. Naturally, in order to make this feasable, these talliers would have to be located in the same area. During their election of the Nominating Board, the voters would be asked to select which of a number of groups should serve as 1970's talliers. They could choose from some of the already existing groups -- SMASH, The Comics Club of Los Angeles; HYDRA, Larry Herndon's Dallas Group; Canada's Academy of Comic Book Collectors with which Captain George Henderson is affiliated; GAS, The Northeastern Ohio Comics Club of which I'm currently president; TISOS, which Mark Hanerfeld belongs to -- to any group of fans who submit their names early enough to appear on the Nominating Board Ballot. This would help eliminate one very unpleasant facet of comics fandom, its being based (from many standpoints) almost soley in New York. With the strong lines of communication now available, there is no longer any reason for the situation to remain thus.

I see a few difficulties in the distribution of the ballots, too. I think we can safely assume that a good number of the fans who vote in the Alleys are Comic Reader subscribers, perhaps these persons make up an undue percentage of the total voters. Sending ballots to non — subscribers for an SASE is a good idea, but I believe Mark should also make copies available for 'zine editors and comix club officers to distribute to readers and members at postage plus 10%. The 10% extra would go toward the cost of running the Alleys. In all, I think that this and my other suggestions would go quite a long way in improving these annual awards.

A copy of this column is being sent to Mark Hanerfeld within a day or so of its completion. If you agree with any or all of my proposals, why not drop Mark a line and maybe we'll see them used on the 1970 Ballot? Write him at: The Academy of Comic Art Fans & Collectors, G.P.O. Box 449, Flushing, N.Y. 11352.

((Note: A facsmile of the 1969 Alley Award Ballot is reproduced in its entirety on the next page - Gary)).

I. BEST COMIC MAGAZINE SECTION

1. Best Adventure Title:
2. Best Fantasy/Science Fiction/Supernatural Title:
3. Best Western Title:
4. Best War Title:
5. Best Romance Title:
6. Best Humor Title:

II. BEST PROFESSIONAL WORK OF 1969

1. Best Editor:
2. Best Writer:
3. Best Pencil Artist:
4. Best Inking Artist:
5. Best Cover of the Year:
6. Best Full Length Story of 16 pages Or More:
7. Best Feature Story from 1 to 15 Pages:
8. Hall of Fame Award:

III. THE POPULARITY POLL OF 1969

1. Best Adventure Hero Strip:
2. Best Adventure Group Strip:
3. Best Villain:
4. Best Supporting Character:
5. Strip Most Needing Improvement:

IV. NEWSPAPER STRIP SECTION

1. Best Adventure or Human Interest Strip:
2. Best Humor Strip or Panel:
3. Hall of Fame Award:

V. FAN ACTIVITY SECTION

1. Best Limited Reproduction (Ditto, Mimeo, Xerox) Fanzine:
2. Best Unlimited Reproduction (Photo-Offset, Lithograph) Fanzine:
3. Best Fan Artist:
4. Best Fan Writer:
5. Best Fan Project:

FACSIMILE of 1969 ALLEY AWARDS BALLOT

CHAIN LETTERS

After reading that sub-title, I imagine about nine mouths widening in amazement and perhaps nine persons tensing up. They don't have to worry about my revealing their names here. They'd better worry about the Post Office Department, though, next time they send me one of those "YOU can make up to $8,000 in three months" chain letters. In fact, if I hadn't gotten so hot under my turtleneck when I received nine chain letters in three days, their chain letters would be on their way to my postmaster, who purely hates to receive such items, instead of decorating my waste—basket.

I have never tried to conceal my address. Even if I finally turn professional, my address will be yours for the asking and my eyes will always be receptive to your letters. In return, I ask for common courtesy from those who read my words. Chain letters are not only illegal and bothersome, they are also grandose frauds unworthy of the intelligent fan's consider—ation. I am forced to consider those who send them as lacking in the basics of courtesy, logic, and intelligence. I want nothing to do with them. I hope they'll not further try my patience until that time when they have, shall me say "grown up"! (We shall!)

Only three outbursts of temper (on three consecutive days) on my part have prevented those letters from going to my postmaster. All future chain letters will be carefully saved and presented to that dedicated individual for action. Need I add that I couldn't care less what happens to chain letter writers after that?

Moral: The chain shall not be the only thing busted.

NEW WORLDS

A friend of mine recently returned from a three weeks' stay in London for a course in British Political structure (And I'm still trying to figure out what that side trip to Paris...) presented me with a copy of the British Science Fiction Magazine, NEW WORLDS, which is supposedly the founder of the "New Wave" of Science-Fiction writing, which supposedly exists, though I really doubt its existance except in the minds of some of the writers and fans. And we all know what an unstable lot fans and writers are.

Now I have never doubted the existance of experimental writing. There are too many fine examples of it present. Looking at John Brunner's stand on Anzibar, I see a new technique of story-telling. I also see a damn fine story. I have never doubted the existance of good writing, no matter what its form.

Nor have I doubted the existance of bad writing, no matter what its form. New Worlds is chock full of bad writing. Well, not exactly chock full. The magazine is 36 pages (counting the covers) and contains slightly less material than the normal high school Literary Annual (senior year) much more than I did

New Worlds. Of course, the fact my own story was chosen to lead off the annual, plus the section of advice given to young writers by 37 respected writers, might prejudice me just a wee bit. ((That story will appear shortly in a future issue of FF - Gary)). I wouldn't insult the writers of New Worlds by claiming that high school students can write better than they, but...

It should be made perfectly clear that I am not including every writer of New Worlds in this critique. Harlan Ellison has done many stories for the magazine and one of them appears in the issue now being considered. On his worse days, Ellison is one of the finest writers around. I recommend all of his books to you. They may not be equally good, but they are all worth your effort. It should also be made perfectly clear that I will be discussing a single issue of New Worlds -- Number 197, the January 1970, issue. For all I know, this issue may have been an exception. Frankly, I doubt it.

Editor Charles Platt starts off the issue by saying that his 18 contributors were specially commissioned to "Forget 1970. What about 1980?" Magazines written about a specific theme terrify me. I'll read them of course, but the law of averages usually battles against them. You tell a dozen or so writers to write around some theme and you'll get a half dozen clunkers. Thank Heaven Charles Platt chose a broad theme. But who do we blame for the results?

"Michael Butterworth examines human perception of space, inner and outer". In less than 250 words? It's not hard if you forget about plot development and character development. There is a plot, but Butterworth doesn't do anything with it. He just summarizes. It's a shame because the first sentence was a grabber. "Space is communication".

"Graham Charnock explores sexuality of totally subserviant humanized robots". Funny. I could have sworn he was talking more about suicide and sex. Didn't even spot any of those robots, Platt. Did catch a glimpse of an over heated homosexual. Didn't spot any good writing. By this time, I wasn't expecting any.

"Ed Bryant presents an everyday situation overlaid with subtleties from a more sophisticated future". It would have helped a bit if Bryant had realized that he had a much better story in his sub-plot (actually the only developed plot at all) than in those overwhelming subtleties. Of course, he had to do an "arty" story instead. Made a sale to New Worlds that way. Only the readers lost out.

The wonderment just never ceases, folks. "John T. Sladek, in best science-fiction traditions, tells a tale of tomorrow packed with truly-amazing inventions". Glutted, maybe. With some truly imaginitive inventions. At least Sladek has a plot. Even if he's not too sure about what it is. Which makes two of us.

And "J G Ballard contrasts morbid trends on sex surgery with bogus sentimentality". Well, I suppose bogus sentimentality is an improvement over morbid sex surgery trends. It is amazing how J G Ballard can both bore and disgust us at the same time. Of course, his ignorance of sex surgery cannot go unmentioned. However, we won't dwell on it.

"Finally Joyce Churchhill looks back on Orwell's book, 1984, reminding us how unwise it is to make predictions". How about if I predict that ten years from now, 1984 will still be a widely-read book and that New Worlds will be a scarcely-remembered nightmare.

In closing his editorial, Platt states that "There is not a great deal here. . . ." and would be absolutely correct if he did not expand his sentence with, "concerning the future of our environment. But there is a lot concerning us as people". Bull. Maybe to you, as a person, bud. I refuse to claim even a species relation to the assorted weirdos and creeps that reside within your pages.

In closing, I must conclude that the staff of New Worlds is a very pessimistic lot. By their thinking, if the human race makes it to the 1980's, we'll be reduced to "totally subservient, humanized robots", obsessed with our materialism and subject to madness upon seeing the vastness of the universe. The lucky ones will be transformed into sex freaks with Dr. Ballard drooling over our deformed bodies. You don't have to be sick to read New Worlds, but it sure helps. Good night, Mr. Platt.

Looking back over the completed pages of this manuscript, I notice that it's quite different from the typical fanzine column, especially for me. I think of it as an interesting change-of-pace and hope you feel the same. If enough of you liked it, we'll vary our pitches a bit more in the future. In the meantime, I'll be at the same old address: 11203 Peony Avenue Cleveland, Ohio 44111. My loyal calot is waiting at the mailbox for your letters. Happiness at last!

·END·

THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE

THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE by DAVE TRANSUE

Super Heroes are once again dying out, giving way to an assortment of Archie-type, Romance and Mystery comic books all of which show no literary or artistic promise whatsoever. Whether or not the super hero will flourish once again in the 80's is yet to be seen. However that is not the concern of this particular essay. Rather, I wish to offer a critical appraisal of the second golden age, which will consist entirely of my own biased views although the statements made may very well mirror your own feelings.

Undoubtedly I'll make several enemies with this writing, but that's the price I must pay for voicing my thoughts. So prepare yourself to condem or condone my ideas, for I commence at this very moment:

MARVEL COMICS

Quite candidly, the entire mystique associated with this publishing house completely escapes me. Stan Lee does not, nor has ever impressed me as a writer of particular significance in the comic world. Granted, he introduced a more realistic touch to his characters but by no means are his alleged characterizations presented in a literary manner which can be called "adult". Anyone past age fourteen who still enjoys actually reading comics is in a bad way. (Collecting comics, enjoying art, etc. all makes up an enjoyable hobby, but if you're veritably purchasing comic books from your local drugstore for the "literary" pleasure you derive from them, you're rather retarded past a certain age level!) You may argue that the Marvel comic is more "adult" than comics of the forties and fifties. Well, if you call a comic chock full of nauseating wit, bad "soap opera" drama, and underdeveloped characterization more "adult" I'll go along with you. Otherwise, "uh-uh". Mr. Stan (Lee) Leiber can be credited for introducing "soap opera" inclined drama (and very poor, unsubtle material at that) - nothing more! Most writing presented by the Marvel writers are purely slick re—hashes of plots used already too often with an occasional and far spaced flash of brilliance of insight on the writer's part. And, of course, there are always several undercurrent sub plots usually drenched in so-called drama. As far as writing is concerned, I feel Marvel falls flat on its face.

It has already been determined that the most successful comic characters are those which are drawn by one artist (maybe why the Fantastic Four had remained Marvel's most enjoyable and enduring comic). Stan defies this factual statement by juggling artists around from comic to comic in a rather nonchalant manner. One issue the Hulk may be drawn by Herb Trimpe and the next by Sam Rosen! This ruins any chance of creating an individuality in the comic and as a result said comic is ignored by all in favor of more jucier purchases available. Undeniably, Stan Lee is extremely poor at editting and should have been attentive of Julius Shcwartz's excellent editorilizing rather than indolently continuing to slosh around in

the editorial mire he'd created. Alas, far too much damage has already been done to ever hope for salvation at this time.

Yet, amidst all this poor editting and scripting some tremendous artists have evolved and several comics will earn a place in innumerable fans lists of favorite comics. The Fantastic Four Magazine wins the honor of being heralded Marvel's best effort. This is due primarily to Kirby being the consistant artist on this publication; the imaginitive inking of one Joe Sinnott; and this being the birthplace of a cast of characters which will always remain dear to fandom, such as the Silver Surfer, the Black Panther, the Inhumans, Dr. Doom and many more! This truly earns the honor of being called Marvel's best effort. Other comics which will be remembered are Steranko's SHIELD and Captain America and Neal Adam's X-Men. The rest all fall into limbo of all those trite and forgettable comics which were good at moments, but at best will be remembered for very little literary value.

Some very fine artists such as Buscema, Kane, Wood, etc. never had the opportunity to work on a really good strip although the strips they were assigned always turned out wonderfully, art-wise. In the long-run, Marvel will be remembered for being the springboard for some exceptionally talented artists and the above mentioned comic titles, and not a whole lot more. (Assuredly, I've a good many staunch Marvel fans ready to pour boiling oil over me accusing me of being a DC fan, but that is most definitely not the case as well as you'll learn. If I must be accused of anything call me an EC fan).

NATIONAL (D.C.) COMICS

From the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and sixty two and onto the year nineteen hundred and sixty nine (the second golden age) National seemed content with growing fat over the earnings raked in from their ever popular Superman and Batman books. However, certain titles did originate which deserve considerable recognition from this particular author. Charlton's whiz-kid, Dick Giordano was editting some mighty fine comics and Joe Kubert was revolutionizing the entire war comic scene with his explosive Enemy Ace. Just recently, Frank Robbins aided and abetted by the fantastic Wood/Brown team have turned out some of the finest Superboy comics ever. But aside from Giordano's Deadman, Robbin's Superboy, and Kubert's Enemy Ace, not much quality material has shown itself or at best nothing new has hit the stands. Superman is aimed at a juvenile set so we can overlook this area. And the romance, teen age and mystery books I'd best soon forget. Assuredly some very good artwork has come from the DC offices during this time period what with Frank Thorne, Berni Wrightson, Joe Kubert, Nick Cardy, Carmine Infantino, Neal Adams, Murphy Anderson, Gil Kane, Jim Aparo and Bob Brown pencilling and inking for them! Mostly, DC shall be remembered for introducing two of comicdom's most revolutionary and realistic characters, Deadman and Enemy Ace during the second golden age. And quite frankly, if I was a publisher and those two titles were amongst my credits, I'd be completely satisfied.

GOLD KEY COMICS

Beneath all those shallow funny animal and "based on T.V." type comics, this firm has produced several worthy titles during the second golden age and this was due mostly to the illustrators who embellished said comics. Thanks to the titanically talented Russ Manning, Gold Key's Tarzan and Magnus, Robot Fighter are a welcome addition to anyone's collection! Needless to say, if it weren't for the exceptional illustration of Manning neither comic would be of any value whatsoever. M.A.R.S. Patrol's first few issues were sumptuous due to the fine artistic talent of one Wally Wood, although upon his departure from the comic it turned into an extremely juvenile publication not worth anyone's attention, let along considering

it as an addition to one's sacred collection. However, possibly Gold Key's best piece of graphic literature is the Twilight Zone; the most deftly written and drawn horror comic since the EC one's of old. Intelligently written and well-drawn; it should be on the desks of both Marvel and DC editors so they can observe a good horror comic and try to upswing their horror comics to the over-all quality of this delightful graphic story magazine

MIGHTY COMICS

The heroes presented had a tremendous amount of potential but thanks to lousy scripting by Jerry Seigel and poor art by Paul Reinman they never caught on and soon faded..! Shame! If Bob Haney and Neal Adams had handled these strips it might have surpassed both Marvel and National in content. Such possibilities wasted!

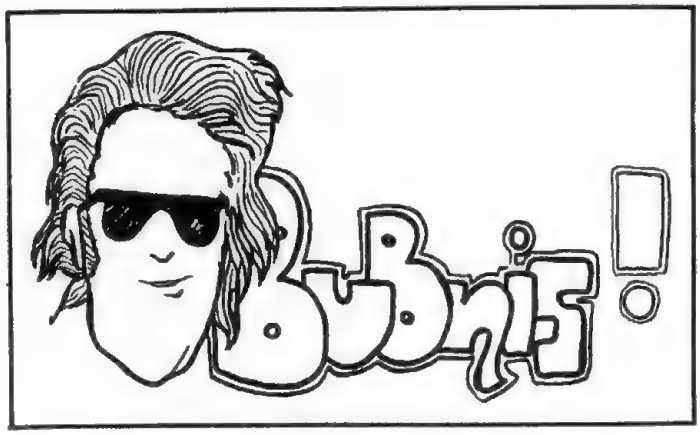
CHARLTON COMICS

Charlton enjoyed a brief flash of brilliance under the expert editorial management of Dick Giordano producing some memorable titles (such as Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, Judo Master and Peacemaker). But when Giordano switched to under the DC banner (where he was to do even further great things) Charlton once again sank back into hacking out god-awful crud which smears the name "comic book".

EPILOGUE

Thus ends my controversial critique on the second golden age. It's a sure bet the letter column will be filled next issue with derogatory rebuttals to this article. Hopefully not. Hopefully people will realize these are my views and the fact I'm not trying to force them on anyone else. If you'd like to express your views on my article to me simply write me at: 171 Ithaca Road, Horseheads, N.Y. 74845. I'll answer all.

Fanzine Fandom Revisited



by Bernie Bubnis

A series of articles about fandom by a pro!

Things have gotten so professional in fandom I'm almost ashamed to look back at the early efforts of myself and some other ancient fans. The photo offset process has so enhanced the visual effect of fanzines that I'm looking forward to see what tomorrow has in store.

My first contact with the new comic revolution came about through a 1960 one-hundred page lithoed 'zine called XERO. The front part of the mag was devoted to discussion and chatter pertaining to Science Fiction fandom, and the second part was a series dealing with the Golden Age --- All In Color For A Dime. Science Fiction fans were always hip to trivia and the series proved a real success. Newer fans will probably have a chance to catch this ten part series in the near future. XERO's editor, Dick Lupoff, who is now a professional editor plans to release the whole thing in book form.

One morning I went to get the mail and was suprised to find it had been left all over my front yard. The first issue of ALTER-EGO was thinly stapled and the Post Office took every advantage to rearrange the pages. When I finally got all the pages together and off the neighbor's lawn, I then tried to read it. It was dittoed and reproduction was rather poor. From this humble beginning comic fandom started to take on a personality of its own. True, most of the first one-hundred or so people who received this first copy were really turn coat SF fans, but the building blocks had been laid.

I knew I had been turned on and was just dying to get my own 'zine out in the mails. I bought Jerry Bail's first hand ditto machine and to this day the muscular development of my right forearm is due soley to his credit. There was only one way to work this old bessie -- by hand. To this day I'm known to crack fingers when I shake hands and the stain of ditto duplicating fluid is still shiny under my fingernails.

I named my first venture, Comic Heroes Revisited and it earned the credit of being the most expensive fanzine of the time. It had about 40 pages and I charged 50¢ a copy. I've never operated a 'zine that didn't break even, but that was the only way you could work it in the old days. A lot of 'zines went under for lack of scratch, but I forged on, putting myself through college and driving to the first comicon in a Cadilac. All kidding aside, 'zines did have great money problems, but as always the good ones lasted to fight another day. As you might have guessed mine didn't live...

I did manage to get out another copy and used the profit to buy myself an electric ditto machine, the status symbol of early 60's fandom. I was on top now, and plotted a way to really make money. I started taking in other fan's 'zines and running them off on my machine. I guess this was the first step to the organization of New York fandom whose brave forces went on to put on the first comic convention in 1964. More about that trip a little later.

I think the most amazing success story to come out of fandom was that of GB Love. I spotted a letter in an early issue of Mystery in Space requesting fans to contact him to start a comics club. There were only about eight of us, but he went ahead and released the first copy of Rocket's Blast. It was only a carbon-copied two pager, but the beginning was there. He graduated to mimeo along with dittoed inserts contributed by yours truly. When I left fandom a few years ago his RB*CC was on the top of the list. Returning this year I find that the status quo has remained the same and the excellence of the product is still on top.

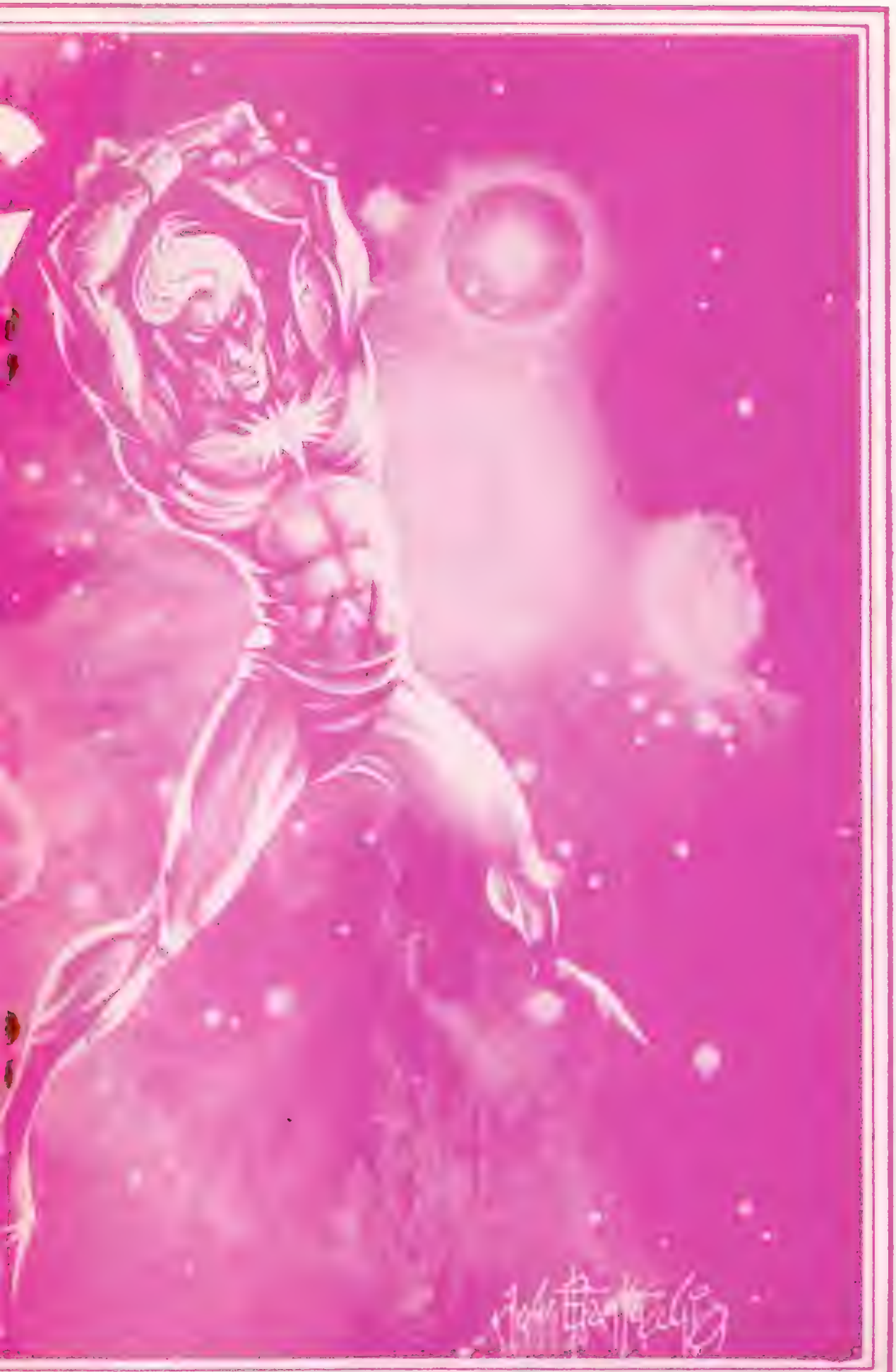
For history's sake alone I'll credit Bob Stewart with the first comic oriented 'zine. Although it differs greatly from what we have today or even for that matter what Lupoff did in XERO it was definitely the first of its kind. Spurred on by the excellence of the EC product Stewart published two issues of EC Fan Bulletin. It revolved around news of upcoming things from EC and was too early for its own good. It is long gone, but Stewart's artwork can be seen in various underground comics and a few Warren items.

Does fandom breed pro's? Ackerman, Scarwtz and Weisenger teamed up for an early SF fanzine of their own long before they reached prodom. My good friend, Len Wein of olden New York fandom went on to become a bit of a writer. Marvin Wolfman, Roy Thomas, E. Nelson Bridwell, Len Brown, Larry Ivie, Russ Manning, Ray Bradbury, Pearson, Dubay, Glut, Foss and the list goes on and on. Oh yeah, I made it too. I'm still the same cheat and sneak in later life that I was for so many years in the protection of comic fandom.

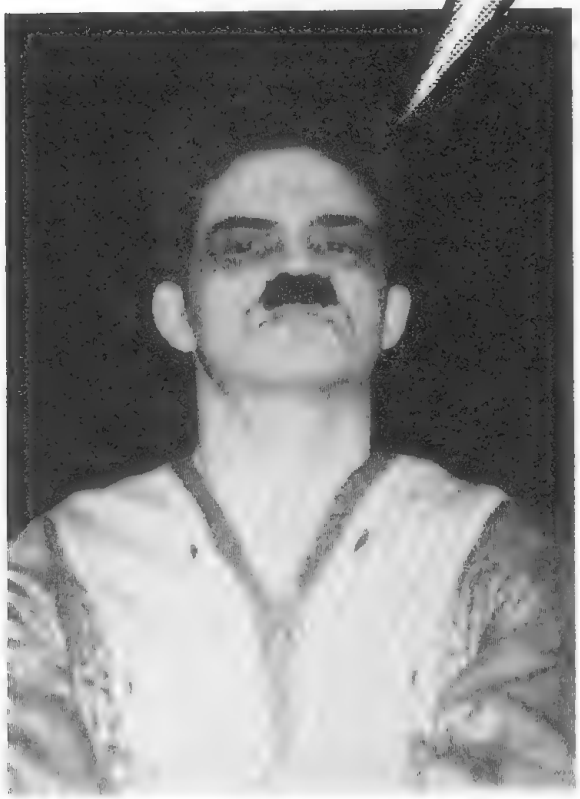
So, save those fanzines gang. They could be worth a few bucks in the next one hundred years. We've lost a lot of the old dittoed material. Printing has a long life -- ditto pages just fade away. So do old fans...

THE END

KTANG



F.F. PRESENTS AN INTERVIEW WITH ME...



DWIGHT R. DECKER

DWIGHT DECKER HAS "BELONGED" TO FANDOM (OR VICE-VERSA) FOR THREE YEARS NOW. IN THOSE THREE YEARS, HE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO DOZENS OF FANZINES, PUBLISHED TWO HIMSELF, AND HAS GOTTEN QUITE A FEW NAMES FOR HIMSELF (AND 'TIS A GOOD THING WE AREN'T UNDER CODE AUTHORITY OR I COULDN'T PRINT THEM ALL):GRUESOME, GROSS, FRANK, PROVOCATIVE, DISGUSTING AND OPINIONATED, BUT MOST IMPORTANT, ONE OF THE BEST WRITERS, FAN OR PRO, TO COME ALONG IN QUITE SOME TIME, ABLE TO WRITE ON ALMOST ANYTHING INTELLIGENTLY AND ENTERTAININGLY. IF FANTASTIC FANZINE ENTERPRISES EVER ATTEMPTED A FANDOM ANNUAL, COLLECTING THE BEST WORK IN FANDOM, IT WOULDN'T BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A BIG PORTFOLIO OF DWIGHT DECKER'S FANNISH WORK. -GARY GROTH

WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME INTERESTED IN FANDOM AND FANZINES, AND HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THEM?

Fandom and I discovered each other in the summer of 1967. I had a letter printed in Spiderman, and the Yancy Street Gang, a Marvel Club of that era, sent me a copy of the Gazette, their publication. I was impressed and sent in my membership and I was in. My days in the YSG led me to other fanzines, which is how I wound up in fandom at large.

WHAT WAS THE FIRST FANZINE TO FEATURE YOUR WORK, AND HOW WAS IT THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST FANZINE YOU DECIDED TO WORK FOR?

Technically, the first fanzine was the Yancy Street Gazette. What appeared wasn't exactly an article, though; it was a letter which I had received from Fabulous Flo at Marvel, and which I sent on to the YSG with an introductory explanation. My first formal article was a gab column in Marvel Mirror # 2, with the title, "The Fifth Column". Greg Kishel published Marvel Mirror; I did work for him first because he was the first fan I "met". An article of his which appeared in the sample YSG I had received intrigued me and I wrote him, discussing various points he had brought up. This started a corrospondence, and since Greg had been in fandom longer than I had, he was good enough to answer my questions and help me get started. Naturally, when he got his own fanzine going, I was right there, eager to help out.

UP TO NOW, WHAT FANZINES HAVE FEATURED YOUR WORK? (I TOLD YOU THIS INTERVIEW QUESTIONAIRE WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME TO FILL OUT!)

Ready for this? Okay, Yancy Street Gazette, Marvel Mirror, The Collector, Fan Focus, Heroic, Emperial Comics, Fantasy World, Modern Collector's Review, Mithras, Wonder Worlds, Fantastic Fanzine, Adult Crudzine Illustrated, Fandom Newsletter, Opening Sunset, All Dynamic, Dateline: Comicdom, Comic Showcase, Comicology, and probably a couple more by the time this gets published. That list does not include fanzines I've just had LOC's appear in, nor my own fanzines, Freon and True Fan Adventure Theatre (True F.A.T.). Stuff published includes articles, satires, gab columns, spot illo's and strips (I sorta' dabble in cartooning as well as writing), short stories and some material that's totally unclassifiable.

WHEN AND WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

You want to know how too? I suppose this is a reasonable question, though. I saw one 'zine that inter-

viewed a girl who had done art for it --- all she was asked was what comics she liked, what pros she liked, and what she liked to draw. Nothing was asked about her; age, other interests, or anything else that fills a vague outline of a human form into a living personality. When I finished reading the interview, I didn't really know anything more about her as a person than I did just seeing her art. So, I suppose if I like to read chatty, nosy interviews, I'm going to have to put up with chatty, nosy questions when it comes my turn to be pried open. I was born at 2:30 AM on January 26th, 1952 in the hospital at Van Wert, Ohio. Incidentally, that's fan artist Ron Foss' home town, or was, before he moved to california. My first five years were spent in Middle Point, which is not far from Van Wert, and then I was moved to Mount Vernon, about 45 miles northeast of Columbus. After eleven years there, my stepfathers changing jobs put me in Westerville, about ten miles north of Columbus. Eighteen months there, and it was time for me to go to college, so here I am now at Bowling Green, twenty miles south of Toledo.

DWIGHT, I DIDN'T THINK EVEN YOU COULD MAKE SUCH A LONG ANSWER OUT OF THAT QUESTION. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF TODAY'S COMICS AS COMPARED TO THOSE OF THE GOLDEN AGE, AND THE OLD PULPS.

I suppose the writing is better, and the art quality is generally higher, but what comics have gained in technical appearance seems to have been offset by the loss of what you might call "spirit". 1940's comics were fun, and many of them had a dynamic youthful atmosphere where nothing was impossible if you had the will and the guts to accomplish it. That, to me is heroism. I guess comics were an emerging art form, like the movies had been twenty years before, and the creators were enthusiastic and dedicated to what they were doing. It's a funny thing, since "heroes" had not been approved of by serious literature since the end of World War I, when post war disillusion seemed to set in on all the arts. Suddenly, a new art form appeared and once again, heroes were fearlessly roaming the night, fighting for justice. Comics retained a little of that spirit, that heroic quality, after World War II, in what super hero comics remained, but if you want to see what the dominant philosophy of our era really is, look at the horror and crime comics of the postwar period, later forties and early fifties. Man is impotent, ineffectual, and weak, constantly at the mercies of malevolent forces of an unknowable universe. His only hope is to be ruthless and cruel, and grab whatever he can get, and to hell with anyone he has to stomp on to get it. Heroes? Don't be childish! And today, the heroes of our era, such as Marvel's, present a considerably improved view of the world than comics of the precode era, but that frewheeling heroic quality which so characterized the Golden Age is so watered down as to be unnoticable.

ARE THERE ANY FIELDS BESIDES COMICS THAT PARTICULARLY INTEREST YOU?

My major interest is political philosophy. I'm of a libertarian bent, and I believe that the proper role of government is night watchman, rather than social reformer, which accounts for my active membership in the Young Americans for Freedom. What I'm going to do with my political science major once I get out of this place is a good question, since I have little interest in teaching. I hope to write, and publicize some of my ideas on Great Issues. On the level of hobbies, another interest of mine is model railroading, and if I ever have a home of my own, I'm going to have the biggest, goldurndest lay-out you ever saw...!

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED GOING INTO THE COMIC FIELD?

I've considered it, and I just might try someday. I wrote to Roy Thomas about it a while back, but he never replied, so if I ever decide in earnest to crack comics, I'm going to have to go to New York myself. Maybe pull a gun on them... As I said, I'm not sure what I'm going to do after college, so there's a good possibility I'll try to get on some company's staff one of these days. Have to get through college, first.

ARE THERE ANY WRITERS IN THE PRO FIELD WHO HAVE INFLUENCED YOUR WORK?

I would like to think that my writing is all mine, but I suspect I've been influenced by about everybody I've read. Edgar Rice Burroughs must be a big factor, and Ayn Rand....Allen Drury (Advise & Consent, etc.), Dickens to a large extent, Heinlein and some others. I've just read some of Kurt Vonnegut's work and while I despise his philosophy and his plotting.I loved his sardonic style and I can't wait to try out some of his techniques I read about everything and just pick out what I like.

WHAT KIND OF COMIC MAGS, IF ANY, DO YOU COLLECT?

Marvels, of course, but I haven't been interested in anything they published before Fantastic Four # 1. Maybe someday I'll start collecting Timely, but prices will have to drop first. As you may have guessed, I don't like horror stories, which is why Atlas has so little appeal to me. I really love Carl Barks' Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge; I've been buying piles of Disney Comics to get Barks' work, but dealers' prices are sky-rocketing on that stuff and I can't

afford as much as I like. I like a lot of different comics, but I don't think I enjoy anything more than reading a Carl Barks story I haven't seen. I'm also working on a collection of MLJ comics; when I speak about a heroic quality in superhero comics, MLJ is what I think of first. Their heroes were gutsy and uncompromising, and realistic in a way. I think MLJ was probably the only line of comics that really developed the potential in the superhero concept, or else they carried it farther than anyone else. When Archie revived those heroes several years back, and it was a tragedy the way they made clowns out of them, attempting to cash in on the Batman 'camp' craze. Still, the MLJ heroes had an inherent dignity and style that managed to get through the "Mighty Comics" disaster, and liking what little heroism that leaked out, I went on to start purchasing the original comics. I have about a hundred bucks sunk in MLJ now, and my collection includes Hangman (Special) # 1 and Pep # 1, and I wouldn't trade them for anything.

CURRENTLY, WHO IS YOU FAVORITE PRO ARTIST?

Steve Ditko. Which is funny, since I don't really like his style. He is my favorite because he has such a distinctive style when most other artists have based theirs on still other artists. I also like what he's been doing with Mr. A. From an artistic standpoint, I like the work of Steranko, Colan, Kirby, Adams, and lately, Gil Kane among others.

PRO WRITER?

Probably Roy Thomas, because of his aware and intelligent writing. He isn't prone to the "hip" excesses as Lee. Besides, I can identify with Roy to an extent; he's a fan who made it, which is what I would like to be myself.

HOW'S YOUR WORKING SPEED? F'RINSTANCE, HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO COMPLETE "THE GREAT DEBATE"? [PUBLISHED ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE]

That depends on my interest in the project. The greater the interest the faster it goes. "The Great Debate" was done in one day, first draft. It was originally written, by the way, for Marvel Mirror, and was done late summer - 1968. I had just heard Arthur Brown's Fire on the radio that night and as the night faded into morning I typed away, the lyric and music repeating themselves over and over in my head, backgrounding the thought stream for "Debate". Kishel never used the article, and eventually sent it back when Mar/Mir folded. I kept it around for a long time, and when you requested a "magnum opus" from me, I revised it and updated it, which took about two days. Part One of The Crusader was done on inspiration, and took only a few hours to grind out (Note: The Crusader is a Fan Fiction 'serial' broken down into 3 chapters that will appear in 3 consecutive issues of FF - Gary). My projects usually take longer than I plan because when I really get wrapped up in something, it virtually writes itself, and considerably more material gets written in than I originally intended.

WHOM DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BEST FAN ARTIST?

In my opinion, it would come to a three-way tie between Wendy Fletcher, Dave Russell and William Black. Wendy is tops in art art, and in illustrative comic art, Russell and Black are neck and neck, miles ahead of just about everybody else. Dave has patterned his style after Kirby's, but Kirby's long association with Simon seem to have given the "King's" art a tendency towards grotesqueries (i.e.: Kirby's nazis, or other villains), which Dave has not picked up. In other words, Dave can turn out better Kirby artwork than Kirby.

AND WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE FAN WRITER?

You mean besides myself? Well, anyway... Here's another toss-up. Some fan writers I enjoy are Tony Isabella, Gordon Matthews, Mark Evanier, Greg Kishel - there are quite a few good ones, it seems. If I had to choose one, one whose work I like better than anyone elses, it would be Gordon Matthews. He seems able to write anything and make it interesting and amusing.

RIGHT NOW, WHICH, IN YOUR OPINION, IS THE BEST ALL-'ROUND COMPANY PRODUCING COMICS?

All around, I would say it would have to be Marvel, even though DC has turned out better comics on occasion. Green Lantern is probably more sophisticated and intelligent than any comic Marvel publishes, and of course, DC put out Deadman and Enemy Ace. Unfortunately for DC, they've put out a lot of garbage with the good stuff, which brings their average down.

WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, WAS THE BEST STRIP EVER PUBLISHED?

MLJ's Hangman. This due to atmosphere, since the stories were a little crude by today's standards and the art average for the period. Hangman was what Batman could have been if Robin hadn't messed things up; a lone crusader striking like lightning to bring to justice those beyond the reach of the conventional forces of law.

WHOSE INKING DO YOU PREFER IN COMICS?

Although I like Joe Sinnott's, the answer to this is Syd Shores. His rough, scratchy style is extremely realistic, and combined with Gene Colan's already realistic art, the result is almost photographic. Wally Wood is another great inker; look what he did to Bob Brown's art on Superboy. That comic hasn't been the same since Wood left it -- and I'm worried that the same thing will happen to Captain America when Wood leaves that.

CURRENTLY, IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH FANZINES ARE THE BEST, ART-WISE?

The best art fanzine I've seen yet is Paragon, which is Black's. The reason for it being so good in my humble opinion is because it's crammed with William Black art. I haven't seen the second issue yet, and I hope that other artists who do work for it are as good as Black.

AND BEST FANZINES TEXT-WISE?

In straight factual material, it would have to be Bob Jennings' Comic World. For opinion and good fun, I like Doug Fratz' Comicology. And for the wildest, funniest text stories I ever saw, I love John Stockman's Tales of Torment.

JUST WHAT IS IT YOU LOOK FOR IN A FANZINE? I MEAN, WHAT IS IT THAT APPEALS TO YOU MOST IN A FANZINE?

Humor, I guess. If the editors and writers have a sense of humor, they can make just about anything they publish or write worthwhile and enjoyable. Too many fanzines are deadly serious and pompous - and reading them is like eating mashed potatoes with

nothing to wash it doen. I look for intelligence too; if the staff of a fanzine doesn't know what it's doing or how to do whatever it does, there's little point in publishing. But humor -- not overdone or forced, but naturally, friendly humor is one of the most important elements.

DO YOU GET MANY REQUESTS FOR ARTICLES AND SUCH FROM 'ZINE EDITORS?

At one time I was getting three or four a week, but it's slacked off in the past few months. Apparently zine-eds have wised up.

HOW DID YOU HANDLE ALL OF THEM?

There were so many requests I couldn't answer more than a few. I didn't even have the time to write and thank an editor for his interest and politely turn him down, so I had to ignore all but those which included SASE's. Of course I was flattered that so many people would think my work was worth publishing, but I did have a life outside of fandom to maintain, and I just didn't have time to accomodate everybody. Possibly I should have at least sent a postcard to each person who requested an article, but for a long time my money was such I couldn't afford it.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE PRESENT FANZINES BEING PUBLISHED?

There are so many, it's hard to keep up with them, but the number allows for a wide variety of different kinds of fanzines. I buy as many as I can afford, and which appeal to me --- those I don't enjoy, I don't continue to buy. Enough other fans do this, and poorer zines either improve or die, so free market economy is continually improving zines, and encouraging better zines. The problem is that sometimes good fanzines get lost in the mass and die because no one knows about them before it's too late. I notice there's been a big explosion of super-quality fanzines, like Comickazi, Paragon Illustrated, Anomaly, and others, and that's not a trend I'm sure I like - those monsters are EXPENSIVE! I'd rather see more mimeo or ditto zines like Comicology, Heroic or Mithras, which are intelligent, friendly, and fun.

WHAT ON EARTH PROMPTED YOU TO START A FANZINE?

I don't know, but I'd like to shoot it. Freon has been too much trouble. I'm supposed to get # 4 out pretty soon, and that's going to be my last issue, but it looks like there's going to be some problems in even getting it out in the first place. I started Freon as simply something to have fun with, but it wasn't until # 3 was published, almost a year after I'd come up with the idea for a fanzine, that it was anything near the way I'd originally wanted it to be.

Number 1 was a bleary mess and # 2 was an accident. Number 3 was a "5" on the McGeehan scale and months of work, heartache, and expenses. Meanwhile, Doug Fratz was working on Comicology # 4 at the same time, and it came out shortly after Freon; identical in style and format --- and probably somewhat better. Fratz didn't copy me, and I didn't copy him -- it's just that an article fanzine like we're doing can be done only a limited number of way... It was my getting tired of those inherent restrictions of the article genre that led me to starting my second zine, True Fan Adventure Theatre (True FAT). Freon was a lot of work, but an all fiction zine composed of humorous stories about fans and their woes was just plain fun.

To answer your question. I suppose just about all fans have the burning desire to publish, and some of us end up doing it. It's just the nature of our breed. Once we get into fanzine publishing, we find out all the work there is to it.

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF TALK IN FANDOM TO THE EFFECT THAT THE RB-CC IS GETTING TOO COMMERCIAL, AND THAT FANS ARE GETTING TOO MONEY MINDED. WHAT ARE YOUR OPINIONS ON THIS?

After paying $42.50 for one comic book, and $35 for another, you expect me to answer this objectively? It seems to me that there are two distinct fandoms; that of fans, and that of collectors and dealers. There's a certain amount of overlapping, of course, but for the most part it's the collector/dealer type who is money-minded, while the fanzinish fan doesn't care that much about the financial end. I think for my own part that there's a growing number of Fans, more interested in comics as art than in their bank balance, but I can't really say for sure.

Oh come on, Gary --- you've read enough of my thrilling satires to know what I think of the RB*CC!

WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, WAS THE BEST FANZINE EVER PUBLISHED, CONSIDERING ART, TEXT, LAYOUT, ETC?

John Stockman's Tales of Torment. It was mimeo and the electro stencilled art was...eh, unique, but it's wild, hilarious stories and good fun, fannish atmosphere tickle my fancy.

WHAT'S THE ONE THING THAT CAN RUIN A 'ZINE FOR YOU (NOT INCLUDING, OF COURSE, BAD ART OR BAD TEXT)?

I'm not much of an art fiend, so I'm willing to accept a high degree of "Bad Art" before donating a fanzine to Goodwill, but "Bad Text" cooks it for me right off. Anyway, other than those two factors, it seems to me that the one important thing would be an overly serious editorial attitude. I've been sniping at Comic Crusader for their pomposity for some time now, even though their seriousness is so gross it's hilarious. It doesn't bother most other fans, it seems, so I'm left along, once again, a solitary comic crusader.

IN CLOSING, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SAY ABOUT FANZINES, FANDOM, COMIC BOOKS, OR JUST RAMBLE AROUND EXPRESSING SOME OF YOUR VIEWS AND IDEAS ON THOSE SUBJECTS.

I might mention I do a little art on the side. You yourself saw that strip in Comic Showcase # 3 (the frumpy teacher purposely resembled my 11th grade english teacher -- that full page panel on, I believe, page 10, is nothing more than a wet dream) I'm never going to be a professional artist loved by millions like Frank Frazetta or Jack Kirby or even Paul Reinman (I like Paul Reinman!) But my cartooning is something I like to play around with. I'm doing a propaganda comic book for the local YAF chapter, incidentally. It's called Liberty Comics, and it features Captain Torch battling the SDS on a great Midwestern Campus. I'm doing both the art and writing, and those who have seen the completed portions have been invariably grossed out. The SDS is composed of five members --- the leader who looks like Hitler, two associates who resemble Castro and Mark, a beautiful sweet girl who swears like a garbageman, and a black militant who talks like Steplin Fetchit.

By the way, Gary, you didn't ask me for my opinion of the best all-time fannish cartoon strip. That was Wendy Fletcher's The Rebels. Only two installments of the story ever appeared; one in the low circulation west coast zine, Fandom Onium # 2, and the second, originally intended for F-O # 3 which never came out, appeared in the even more limited circulation amatuer press association, CAPA-Alpha. I hope Wendy decides to do something more with the characters so that fandom at large can appreciate them.

Golly gee, Gary G., I talk a lot, don't I? I suppose I should wind this up and forego my fraught—with foreboding philosophical discussion on the future of comics. Fandom has been a lot of fun and I've met a lot of great people. I hope to be around for a long time, enjoying the good times of being in one of the most exciting groups of intelligent and energetic people on earth. One of the highlights of my experiences in fandom will probably be this interview. Thank you, Gary.

Dwight R. Decker

THE GREAT DEBATE

Captain America vs. the Red Skull

by Dwight Decker

"Hey -- I just got the latest Captain America, and he's fighting the Red Skull!"

"Oh yeah? What did they talk about?"

BACKGROUND— Virtually all heroes in comics have their running villains: Batman's Joker, Superman's Luthor, Fantastic Four's Dr. Doom, X-Men's Magneto, Spider-man's Dr. Octupus....the list is as long as the list of heroes, and since most heroes have stables of villains (with the exception of Dr. Solar, who seemed to have fought only one villain in his entire career), the list is longer. The very concept of a super — villain is not too far fetched, if one can accept the existence of a super hero. If certain phenomena can relate to the human body to work certain changes and result in "super powers", such phenomena would operate impartially: it would engender powers in anyone who happened to be standing in the way, and not only to persons with rigid moral codes. Persons with no moral codes at all, coupled with power drives and greed complexes, would naturally use any powers to achieve ends and gain values at the expense of helpless people, and by definition would be "evil", and therefore "villains". On the other hand, persons with inflexible morals would seek to preserve those values which are rightfully theirs, and oppose the looters, whether by force or other means.

This is the basic rationale for the cartooniverse. In applying it to the real world, it has been argued that private vigilantes are as dangerous as criminals, and "super heroes" operating outside the law are a menace to society. Perhaps but the type of criminals who operate in the real world are more or less matched by the law enforcement agencies, and there is no need for super-heroes. In the cartooniverse, where super-villains stalk the earth with private armies are not only justified, but needed.

Of course, the fore-going also applies to those who may not have super—powers as such, but do have extra-ordinary minds and trained, fine tuned bodies, and turn to either looting or defense.

Incidentally, to return to those who may aquire super powers, it would logically seem that in addition to heroes and villains, rather average persons might get them too, and while good at heart, might lack the backbone and uncompromising determination of the hero, and the ruthlessness and sheer evil of the villain. It would be interesting to see an occasional story about such a "grey" and how they coped with his power. Someone with super strength might become a construction worker, for example. Or for that matter, not all heroes necessarily save damsels in distress or battle villains. What would a Howard Hues do, if one day he were bitten by a radioactive rabbit and could leap a half a mile at a time!?

We are all pretty familiar with Captain America, the lone prototype of an army of super-men that was fated to never be, and the Red Skull, the protege of Hitler, and who lusted after nothing less than the complete domination of all mankind to make up for his own mediocrity.

The original Golden Forties stories of Captain America versus the Red Skull were typical of the period, and were rather artless. Either the writers couldn't produce well-handled, mature stories, or they just didn't bother to do so. Dialogue was short, choppy, and stereotyped. The Red Skull was only one of the horde of all that was Nazi villains. For example, in Captain America # 7, the only philosohpical statement he made all issue was: "Heh! Heh! Hello, Captain! Like a bad penny, I always turn up again!"

That was, however, in another era, when entertainment was expected to only entertain. Today, thirty years later, one must be didactic and say something and in the rewrites of Captain America's World War II adventures which appeared in Tales of Suspense # 65 through 67, it seemed as if Captain America and the Skull stayed up all night on occasion during the war to discuss their respective outlooks.

Marvel has engaged in rewriting rather extensively, for that matter. Captain America Comics continued after the war into the late forties, and Steve Rogers became a school teacher fighting domestic criminals. In the fifties, Captain America was revived briefly to beat down the Communists. Now we are told that Captain America was frozen solid in ice at the end of the war, where he stayed until he was defrosted years later by the Avengers. The discrepency can be overlooked if one ignores all Captain America stories before Avengers # 4, and assumes that the modern version is correct. It makes for a continuous story-line and disposes of Bucky rather nicely. A certain drama and the scope of years is added, with a touch of tragedy.

Captain America's latest revival is comparable to National's revivals of old-time heroes; that is, reviving the name, and perhaps the power, but changing everything else to adapt to whatever changes have

been made in the world since the original hero flourished. The main difference is that Captain America stuck closer to his original form than the National heroes remained to theirs.

The new version of the Red Skull is possibly more related to Captain America than either would like to admit, for both are relics from another time. As we were told in Tales of Suspense # 79, The Skull lay in suspended animation for years in the rubble of a bombed bunker until he was located and rescued by the secret army called "Them". Captain America has had his moments of melancholy and self doubt, wondering how he could adapt to the modern world and make a significant contribution, but the Red Skull seemed to fit right in and immediately began to plan for domination. In a similar situation lesser men would have been unable to adapt and would have retired to raise chickens somewhere, and ponder things; the Skull has no time to long for the past. Marvel could have exploited the similarity to hero and villain, but nowhere was this possibility realized.

Rewriting an old concept is fine if one is about to start all over again. Rewriting in the middle of a strip-continuum is bad writing. Unconcerned, in Spiderman Annual # 5, Stan Lieber went right ahead and blitherly ignored the carefully plotted history he had been building up in Tales of Suspense, and destroyed the credibility of the series. The Red Skull, according to the Annual, was very much active and running a spy-ring in Algeria in 1949 --- four years after he had been gassed into suspension! Yet, if Suspense # 79 was wrong (or denied), we are faced with a fifty year old Red Skull quite able to physically battle and hold his own against a twenty-five year old Captain America who is not only superbly trained and fit, but who is also stronger than normally possible for a human.

Either way we are faced with a contradiction and the realization that comic books are slap-dashedly put together for making the most money with the least effort.

By definition, Captain America is supposed to be all that is America. In dress and action he must represent all that America stands for, and must fight to defend it. During World War II he was utilized to encourage patriotism, which then was rather elemental. He could say something to the effect of: "Fellow Americans! We have a hard battle to win! Every day the menace across the sea draws closer and closer. When the big showdown comes, our enemies will find us read and prepared. So, chins up and keep them flying!" (Makes you want to buy a defense bond, doesn't it?), and it would be regarded as a stirring and important declaration. Today's general sophistication, resulting from better and more available education, that just isn't enough. He must be eloquent, like a High School graduation speaker, and say, as he did in Captain America # 104, "Wherever the deadly spectre of Tryanny looms --- the spirit of FREE men -- proud and united --- will drive it from our shores!"

Of course, everyone in this strip is an accomplished speechmaker. In Suspense # 77, the attractive Agent 13, Sharon Carter's much older sister (a fact apparently forgotten now) cries: "Go ahead...SHOOT ME! At least I shall die for FREEDOM! But when the allies finally crush you into the muck you rose from, what will YOU have died for? Nothing but an insane Fuehrer!" and "We've faced death too many times to fear it now! They may MURDER us, but they'll never break our SPIRITS!" At the sacrifice of believability, Marvel has turned Captain America into almost a pageant, a symbolic representation of men, not individually, but in the abstract. Apparently no realism is actually intended, as none is intended in a pageant. Captain America is the Spirit of America, standing in fighting prowess for what free men are in their beliefs. Sharon Carter is the American Woman, fighting, fearless, loving, and loyal. And the Red Skull is The Enemy, all that opposes America, all that is evil.

The confrontations of Captain America and the Red Skull are therefore not just a fight between a good guy and a bad guy, as they can be read on one level, but can read on other levels as a clash between America and The Enemy, or as even simply Good vs. Evil. Other strips have taken up the first and last themes, and Captain America is more uniquely an expression of the second; America vs. The Enemy. Now what kind of America is the Captain symbolizing? Let's take a look at the philosophical basis on which America was founded, what happened to it, and just what Captain America really is representing:

The Founding Father's have been described as the greatest aggregation of talent ever present in any one undertaking: doctors, lawyers, scientists, politicians, statesmen, philosophers, military men -- and most were passionately devoted to the ideal of freedom. Many had fled to England or other European countries, trying to find a place where they would be left alone from an oppresive government. In the unrestrained climate of America (which they had to watch grow a little by little more restrained as the King of England laid on abuse after abuse) thoughtfully evolved the idea that the givernment is the servant of the people, rather than vice-versa. From this it is only a small step to "That to secure (men's rights) Governments are instituted among men, depriving their just powers from the consent of the governed....." Governments are to protect men, not regulate or rule them, and the rights of the individual comes first in any instance. In the view of many libertarian thinkers, Thomas Jefferson's principle that the best government is the least government, is a desirable ideal, since too much government at once implies cheap politics, bureaucratic expansion, graft corruption, and inevitable misuse of the tremendous power inherent in any organization that collects taxes, makes laws, and drafts armies. Carrying Jefferson's idea to its logical end, the best government might be none at all, but since some individuals aren't about to leave others alone were the police force eliminated, it isn't practical and government remains like fire; useful and a helpful servant when controlled, deadly and destructive when uncontrolled. The control was provided in the Constitution, - when the balance was set up between the three main bodies of government, designed to prevent any undue concentration of power in any one area of government.

The key-note of the organization was rationality. Many of the figures of that day were religious men, but their religion was an eminently practical variety; pray as if God did exist, and work as if he didn't, which covered all contingencies. Other men weren't religious, and still others were downright heretical, but the common denominator of them all was rationality. Faith was not depended on: intelligence and logical thinking were. An exception was made in the Declaration of Independence when it stated that all men were equal before God, implying to an extent that the existence of God was pre-requisite for men to have equal rights. If it were proved that God did not exist the entire philosophical structure falls over, and anyone could justify himself in violating the rights of other people.

For the first time in history, a system was devised

that recognized the rights of individuals to seek their own goals as they saw fit without interference. Two individuals had no more rights than one individual. No one had a right to force another to his will. All affairs had to be conducted by mutually consenting parties. Each and every man had to be free, or it would not be too long before none were free. This was the American ideal; a place where men were free to grow and go as far as they wished, where they would be judged on their merits and achievements, not their ancestry or color.

Men are men. That is all they are. Many times the ideals were ignored. Between 1882 and 1930, over 4500 black men were lynched due to causes invariably stemming from their color. In 1942 thousands of Japanese-Americans were thrown in concentration camps, because they were "Japanese". Yet, however many atrocities and injustices were committed, the ideals were not forgotten, and gradually remembered, and the American public picked itself up again, hoping to do better next time.

So, what is Captain America really fighting for? America, you say. But America is just an arbitrarily marked off slice of land. Its citizens are human beings, like any other 200,000,000 people. So there is no reasonable justification for a nationalism of the "American Uber Allies" variety. America must be worth fighting for, for other reasons than simply the fact that Captain America was born here. The American ideals are what count. Is Captain America fighting for American ideals?

He constantly reiterates he is fighting the forces of evil to preserve liberty, justice and faith. All very well, except that something suggests his arguements are not all they should be. He shouts, "I fight for liberty!", without defining his terms. What is liberty? What does it mean? Is it desirable? Yet, Captain America never bothers to even think about the meaning of the word "liberty", and seemingly parrots it as if it were some mystic formula to be repeated without question. The same is true for the word "justice". Does Captain America mean that those who violate the rights of others should be judged impartially and punished as they deserve, and that men are entitled to the rewards of their honest labors? Or is he just moronically repeating something he saw somewhere in a high school civics book?

Is Captain America fighting for ideals or cliches?

Ideological confusion is not limited to Captain America, either. Education over much of America is a process of putting to memory the proper cliches for the proper occasion, and never quite learning the meaning. Captain America may be symbolic of America in at least one unexpected manner, it would appear. In the Standard American Prevailing Myth, best summarized in your fourth grade history book, we come across the widely-held beliefs, which Captain America endorses heartily, that liberty and justice and faith are all good because...well, because they are. Few attempt to search out their meaning, but most blindly accept them, or what passes for them. The Silent Majority accepts liberty, justice, faith, hope....faith and hope?

Are these two American ideals? Captain America says they are, fights for them, and chides the Red Skull for not having them (Captain America # 101, page 18). To quote the fighting machine, "The only TRUE REALITY lies in FAITH -- and in HOPE!" Well, first of all, the statement is badly written, being triply redundant. (How can there be a FALSE reality? Or any reality but the only one?) Now let's see about whether faith is an American ideal.

By definition, faith is a belief in something which cannot be proved. (Many so-called examples of faith are wrong. For example, when I was a Scout, years ago, the Scoutmaster described faith as being the belief that a light bulb will turn on when one flicks the switch. This is simply a reasonable expectation based on past experience and is not "faith" at all). Faith shut the light out of the Dark Ages when men refused to listen to logic or regard discoveries of new facts of science, since it contradicted what they "knew" through faith and was therefore wrong and evil. Faith is a stark denial of all thinking and sensory perception. Faith is the door that closes the mind to reality. Whatever religious beliefs the men who founded America had, it's well that they were

hypocritical in their daily lives, for it was reason and knowledge gained from experience that built the country. Faith was the mainspring in other countries, invariably the tool of a criminal's legion of petty despots and tin can tyrants. When some things are not open to question, when some things are unknowable, when some things are not proveable, when men cannot reason or think, when men have to use faith instead of their minds, when you have the tyranny that Captain America says he is against. Certainly faith should rather be one of the Red Skull's ideals.

As should hope. Hope is the expectation or the desiring of something. It is a form of wishing. Men do not achieve their desires by wishing for them; they cannot merely wish for them, but must act in some way to achieve them. Hope, too, is the goad of the tyrant, an incentive with which to whip the tortured slaves into working out the years of their lives, without rebelling, and a carrot held in front of them to make them strive, but which will never be reached. Hope has no place in a free society, Men who are free to act, to achieve their desired have no need for it, and those who are simply content to wish for something are already damned.

Faith and hope are not truly American ideals for they did not originate here, not do they belong here. No matter how much lip service has been paid to faith and hope, they did not help, and probably hindered the development of a country where men could be human. The origin of faith and hope was in religion, and at a time when it taught that on earth, men were doomed to be miserable. Only in some distant obscure heaven where only a select few could enter was there happiness. Even then faith and hope were tools of the dictators, used to pacify the people and divert their attention from rebellion. The men who built America loved this life, not the next one; if there were other lives you still could only live them one at a time and the best thing was finding happiness in this one, letting the others take care of themselves. Yet, faith and hope passed into the popular culture as things to be desired because, well they just were, even though they were the last bloody rags of the tyrants robe.

Let's try this again. Captain America is symbolic of America. Now the typical American believes, or is supposed to believe, in the prevailing Mythology of school boy cliches. If Captain America was truly an abstract representation of the Typical American, he would then share the same beliefs. And that he does. This is why he is torn apart forensically whenever he and the Red Skull parry ideologies. The Red Skull may have wrong premises, but at least he thinks logically from them. Relying on faith and hope, Captain America's mind and speech is a hopeless muddle of congressman's speeches on the fourth of July. The Red Skull knows what he is after and why, while Captain America knows somehow that he has to stop the Red Skull, but not really why he has to stop him.

This does not mean that the Red Skull is free of philosophic trouble; only that he is a technical winner over Captain America. When he tries to justify himself, the Red Skull freely admits he is evil, and that he is trying to wreck, conquer, and brutally enslave the entire human race. Let me quote from the nearest approximation to a super-villain the world is ever going to see:

> "I have spent the best years of my life giving people the lighter pleasures, helping them have a good time, and all I get is abuse, the existence of a hunted man". --- Al Capone.

The rottenest men in the world do not blame themselves for anything, not even nazis. The Red Skull should not be an unusually honest exception. If he represents all embodied evil, the ultimate evil is probably evil for the sake of what he would consider to be good. Hitler never thought he did anything wrong; his view was that his end justified any means. He actually believed he would improve the world by eliminating or enslaving the "inferior races". The Red Skull is a protege and trainee of Hitler. Wouldn't he seek to convince Captain America of the valdity of his goal of a National Socialist world of happy people working and inventing under the sanguine and all-knowing Red Skull? (After all, if the Skull still holds any race theories, Nordic types like Steve Rogers and Sharon Carter ought to look pretty good to him). If the Red Skull doesn't think he is right in what he is trying to accomplish, why is he trying to accomplish it?

Captain America began as a pure action strip with some patriotic overtones. Then it was sheer patriotism with enough action and plot to justify it. Currently, it is an ideological confusion. Abstractly, it is a representation of America vs. the forces of evil (and evil hasn't been identified any too clearly, thanks to the vagaries on foreign policy and the bullpen habit of attempting to steer clear of making a stand for anything beyond things that somebody won't find controversial). Captain America is not a true representative of America and what made it, but more that of a typical unthinking citizen who believes everything he was taught. The flaws in the American character stand out among the virtues. When Stan Lee attempted to combine all Americans into one form, he may have succeeded in an aspect he never intended to include at all.

THE END

Review:

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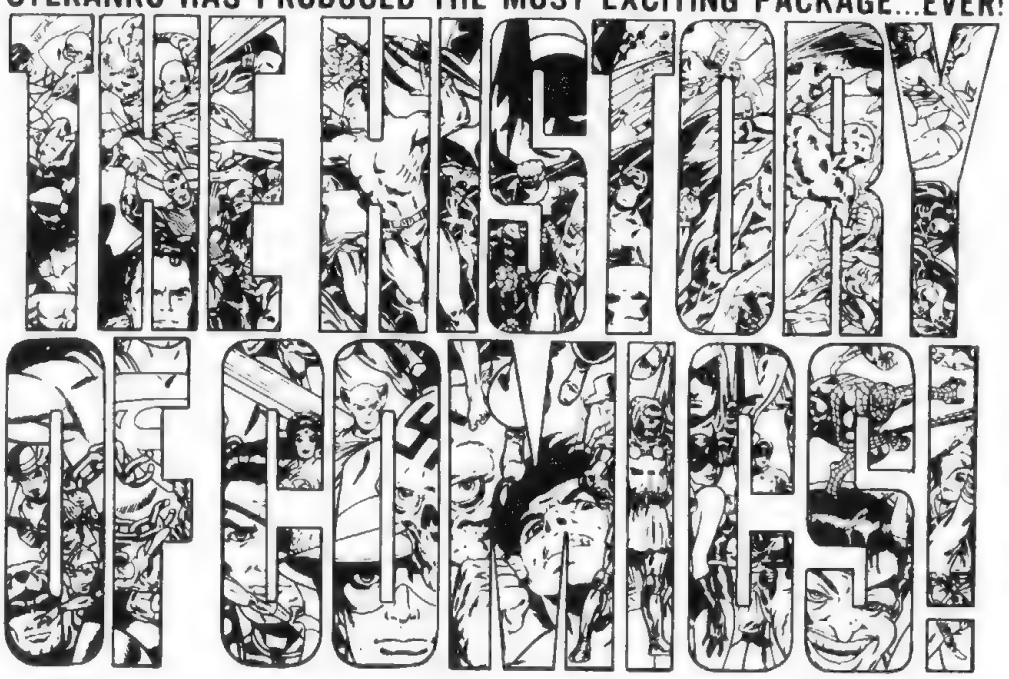

Supergraphics' Superhistory

REVIEWED BY DWIGHT R. DECKER

What can you get that comes in Life Magazine size? Besides, Life Magazine, that is. Well, you can get Look Magazine. You know, the one with the spectacular photography and the perverse editorial style, treating good things as somehow corrupt, and the truly corrupt as somehow good.

You can also get Steranko's History of Comics.

No doubt you saw the ads for the thing. "Stan Lee says: 'It's a Blockbuster!'" along with the rest of the superlatives. And..."IT'S BIG...80 fantastic pages plus a mind-bending 11" x 17" full color poster—size cover by STERANKO!" Whoopee. Figure it out --- 11" x 17" means pages would be Fantastic Fanzine size. That, for the Marvel this wonderful history was supposed to be isn't exactly "BIG!" The purple prose in the ads touched suspicious chords in the fannish mind: Only the very young, or the very new fan really believes advertisements. Virtually always the finished product bears no resemblance at all to the original ads. Sometimes you wonder if the publishers sent you the magazine you asked for.

Case in point --- Alter Ego. For four years and more you heard occasionally that it wasn't really dead, that it was coming out soon with all sorts of good things. Oddly enough, it seemed that the list of contents changed completely everytime Roy Thomas announced it. Then the ads, and it sounded like the Fannish Millenium was upon us. The price was a little steep, but heck, if the promotion was to be believed, it would be worth it. Finally, Alter Ego # 10 was in your hands. A big disappointment, too. A nice, long Kane interview, the Comics Code piece, some emphatically unhumorous humor, and that just about did it. Gone was the great fannish spirit and freewheeling fun that characterized earlier issues. Alter Ego # 10 was dry, dull, thin -- and final insult -- over-priced. Compare it at $1.50, to, say, Fantastic Fanzine # 11 at 75¢!

Right here and now I'm going to introduce a new "Law". You remember "Sturgeon's Law" (roughly, "90% of everything is crud"), well, here's "Decker's Law": "An advertised product will almost never equal its advertising. It will never exceed it."

If you think I expected Steranko's History of Comics to be some crummy little thing of little or no real value, hashing over facts every fan knows by heart, about noon of his second day in fandom, you're right. Decker's law, you know formulated after many over-blown advertising-caused disappointments in fandom. However...!

The Steranko History of Comics! Look at the thing! Look at the ads! Not only did Steranko deliver what he advertised (which almost never happens in the comic world), he delivered more than he advertised. For your pre-publication price of two bucks, he promised 80 pages plus cover. You got 84 plus cover. He promised a page size of 8½" x 11". You get 10½" x 14". He promised 300,000 words in one itty-bitty volume. You're going to get 150,000 words in four volumes. He promised it would be profusely illustrated. You got over 220 cover reproductions, over fifteen full page blow-ups of panels, sketches, and finished drawings, and numerous smaller drawings and, reproductions scattered through the text. Profuse enough for you?

After a suitable time for gosh-wowing has been allowed, look at it from the stand-point of writing and information, which is why you probably wanted the thing in the first place. After copyrights and credits and stuff-like-that-there have been gone through, you get to the Introduction by famous movie director Frederico Fellino. It's pleasant, something to impress your freaky avante-garde friends with when they float in on you, catching you reading Spider-Man instead of Evergreen Review. Then Steranko gets started, first turning his attention to newspaper comics and their origins. One critic has charged that the first chapter is sketchy and incomplete in its treatment of the first comic strips; perhaps, but it should be noted that two large and recent books have been devoted almost entirely to the strips and failed to exhaust the subject (The Penquin Book of Comics and the French book by Couperie and Horn whose title escapes me at the moment). Rather than repeat information discussed at length in the earlier books, Steranko tells you what you need to know for a basic knowledge, and goes on.

Next comes a long history of the pulp magazines. Rick Howe made the comment in FF # 11 that Steranko "has a tendency to stray from the subject a little. It's as if minor details catch his attention, and he moves in to get a closer look sometimes neglecting his appointed task" which could possibly be argued in the case of this chapter. It's engrossing, none the less, and I was suprised to learn just how great an influence the pulp magazines had on comics. Incidentally, a rumor has been going around that DC has been considering some sort of a Batman pulp magazine, which makes Steranko's chapter "The Bloody Pulps" all the more relevant.

Third chapter is the story of Superman, and now we get moving. The rest of the book covers Superman and other super heroes of the forties, such as Batman and Captain America, and the second stringers at Timely and National, with a wrap-up chapter discussing the Kirby Kiddie Korps. Steranko says he will finish up the forties in Volume II, and will cover the "loss of ownership by Siegel & Shuster (and) the lawsuit against Captain Marvel". Hey, take a look at page 56, facing the opening to the chapter on Timely; it's a full page by Bill Everett of the Sub-Mariner clobbering the Human Torch, and it's the best I've seen from Everett in a long time. There's also a full pager by Joe Kubert on page 66, but I'm not as enthusiastic about it; I don't deny Kubert's drawing skill, but I prefer a slick, controlled style to Kubert's rushed looseness.

One feature of the book that left a deep impression on me was Steranko's use of anecdotes told by the men who were right there in the center of things when comics were being created. A personal element is added, and the reader feels a sense of what the early days must have been like. Jules Feiffer hinted at it in his The Great Comic Book Heroes, but never brought it off; Steranko succeeds, and for a good example, read on page 60 about how the first Torch vs. Sub-Mariner battle issue of Marvel Mystery was produced.

Speaking of the Feiffer book, it was probably worth the ten bucks (more now, it being out of print) only for the comic book reprints in the center section. The rest of the book was pretty much Feiffer wallowing in himself and his neurosis -- short on facts, long on Feiffer's opinions. And Feiffer's humor, such as it was. The reprints, thrown into the middle of the book with hardly any explanation or commentary, almost as an afterthought, saved The Great Comic Book Heroes from being a complete bomb, but if the Chelsea House Buck Rogers, Dick Tracy, etc. reprint books and the Lupoff Thompson All In Color For A Dime catch on, watch for its re-issue.

In future columes, Steranko will chronicle not only the rest of the Golden Age of comic books, but the EC era, the story of the Fifties, and the Pre-Code days of Fun, Games, and Gore, Romance Comics, Late Fifties SF Comics, and on into the 1960's Renaissance, with Volume IV reportedly tying up loose ends of miscellany --- even funny animals! --- and finishing off the whole thing. Four volumes, the size of the first one, buckeroos! If the high standards of Volume I are maintained, and there's little doubt they will be, this set will provide a complete course in Basic Comic Art 101. Hmmm...I wonder if Dr. Brownie, head of the Popular Culture Department here at Bowling Green State University, could be induced to offer such a course. The Steranko History of Comics would certainly make a more than adequate textbook. And if each student had to pay $13.00 for the set, they'd be getting off cheap compared to what they would have to pay for books for other courses.

One of the best things about Steranko's book is his attitude expressed in the writing. The Penquin Book was camped up, the Couperier-Horn book was written from a European viewpoint, difficult for American readers to appreciate, the Feiffer book was embarassed about the whole thing -- but Steranko? He obviously likes comics, and writes about them straightforwardly and seriously. He has a sense of humor, but he chuckles with understanding. His amusemant is good-natured. Think of all the newspaper articles you've read dealing with comic books -- the tone in almost every last one was a nasty snicker, right? There's none of that, Thank God, in the Steranko History of Comics.

If you're tired of sending for high quality material and getting garbage in return, if you're trying to find a source of information about comics that doesn't sneer at you for wasting your time on trivia, and if you're getting a little sick of hucksters exploiting your hobby for every fast buck they can get from you for their cheap, "campy" junk (which you have to buy since no one else has what you want) -- then make out the check for $3.25 to Steranko now (or $35 to Rogofsky next year) and get your copy before it sells out. And get the rest of the set as it's printed. It's the best thing to happen to comics, since the four color press.

A brief INTERVIEW with...

SYD SHORES

CONDUCTED FOR FANTASTIC FANZINE BY CRAIG BATTMER

INTRODUCTION—— This interview with SYD SHORES was conducted January, 1970 by Craig Battmer, who sent it in to FF. This is the first part of a two part interview with Mr. Shores. The "sequel" to this interview will appear next issue. As this is the first time any sort of two part interview has been attempted in fandom (at least to my knowledge) I would like to hear what FF's readers think of it. My sincere thanks to Syd Shores for taking time out of his busy schedule to render the illustration printed below. A point of interest is that Syd drew the rendering of Joshua Reno (a character from Sol Brodsky's new comic line) within a week of my contacting him -- which was two weeks before this issue went to the printers! For that, I think Syd Shores deserves an extra round of applause from FF readers! -- GGG.

F.F.: What work in the art field do you work at presently besides comic books?

SYD: I also periodically do magazine illustrations -- primarily for the Men's Adventure type publications.

F.F.: Do you prefer working on other art besides comics, or would you like to work on just comics?

SYD: I prefer to alternate between comics and magazine illustrations because of the variety it offers. My main preference, however, is for comic book artwork, because I feel more comfortable in that field. I find it much more satisfying and it allows for more expression.

F.F.: Would you like to pencil a feature, or do you prefer inking?

SYD: I consider myself primarily as a penciller, although I've been inking more in the last two years. I do hope to pencil again in the future as soon as the oportunity presents itself.

F.F.: Does the quality of your finished inks on a feature depend on how well the artist has pencilled the work?

SYS: Definitely yes! Some pencillers pencil with the inkers task in mind. Others do not. The latter's pencils make the inker's work that much more involved, and more time consuming.

F.F.: Do you use a brush or pen for inking? Or both? And do you dilute your india ink?

SYD: I use a number 4 brush almost exclusively. A pen is used sparingly, usually for ruled straight lines. India ink is never diluted.

F.F.: In the Golden Age, when you were one of the major Captain America artists, about how many pages did you turn out per day?

SYD: The number of pages turned out each day would depend on the subject matter involved in the pages. On the average, however, about two pages of pencils per day would be a normal output.

F.F.: As an inker, about how many pages must be finished per day?

SYD: About 2 pages per day is average.

F.F.: Do you feel it was easier for an artist in the Golden Age than now, with pressures much greater these days?

SYD: No! The pressure is much less these days. While the

quality of work is much more demanding, the format today allows the individual artist a much greater leeway in his artwork. He is not confined to the narrow, strict outline of the script writer's typewritten guidelines.

F.F.: Do you think the comic fans are more demanding of an artist now, expecting more detail in the artwork than in the Golden Age?

SYD: I do feel that the fans are more demanding now! Judging from the mail that arrives at the office, they are most critical. I think this is a good thing. It makes for a better product in the long run.

F.F.: Do you feel a good script is essential for a well done strip?

SYD: Most definitely yes! A good script which includes a good plot seems to rub off on the talent of the artist doing the story. I find it most satisfying working on a well written story.

F.F.: Do you have any favorite artists?

SYD: I would rate Jack Kirby as first rate. John Buscema is right up there too.

F.F.: Favorite inkers?

SYD: I like Joe Sinnott's inking very much.

F.F.: Do you feel any artists have ever influenced your work at all?

SYD: My comic book career started as an inker to Jack Kirby's pencils. I think working with Jack influenced my work more than anyone else.

F.F.: Were editors in the Golden Age more passive about an artist's work than now?

SYD: Not necessarily. I believe they were more critical because they were less informed as to the problems of the artist having to conform to a set written script. Present day editors are more aware and give the artist greater leeway in their presentation.

F.F.: Do you think comic books have improved in various ways since the Golden Age?

SYD: Yes I do. Because of the greater leeway of the artist, as I've previously mentioned, the end result has been greatly enhanced. Also, the stories are more thought out and make for better reading. One great feature that has been innovated (at least by Marvel) has been the introduction of humanness qualities to the superheroes. Their human traits and weaknesses have added a touch of realism and credibility which the Golden Age books lacked.

F.F.: About what length of time did you have to finish a Captain America feature when you were the artist, and how does that compare with today?

SYD: It was about the same length of time.

F.F.: Did you have a favorite inker then, and did you ever ink your own work?

SYD: For the time that I worked on staff for Marvel from 1940 to 1948, I worked in close association with Vince Alascia, who did practically all the inking on my pencils. He was used to my style and worked very well with it. I did practically all my own pencils and inks from 1949 to 1957 while I was free lancing.

F.F.: Did you do any of the Captain America covers?

SYD: While I worked on the Captain America feature, I did practically all of the covers.

F.F.: Do you feel that comic art is a true art form?

SYD: Yes I do. It is highly specialized, and not every artist can do it. I know personally of several fine artists who have tried it and were unsuccessful.

F.F.: What size paper did you use when you drew Captain America in the Golden Age?

SYD: Borders were 12" x 16½", present borders are 10" x 15".

F.F.: Did you draw anything besdies Cap?

SYD: The Black Rider, The Blonde Phanton, Two-Gun Kid, Combat Kelly, Wild Bill Pecos, various war stories, Crime Does Not Pay, Romance and many more too numerous to mention. After all, this covers a period of many years.

F.F.: Would you please tell us fans in general what it was like to be an artist in the Golden Age? I'm sure this would interest many fans.

SYD: As far back as I can remember, I've always drawn. Always fascinated by well-drawn artwork. I was an early fan of Alex Raymond who drew Flash Gordon, and Hal Foster who drew Prince Valiant. I saved and studied their work avidly. They made a great impression on me. After graduation from the Art School of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, I felt that comic book art offered the kind of work that I was most interested in. After all, I was still a fan of Raymond and Foster. In those early days, the comic publishers relied on the middleman to provide the bulk of the artwork for their comic books. It was a package deal whereby the middleman would maintain an art studio and supervise all the artwork for the publisher. It was to this place that I scurried to with my pencils sharpened to a fine point. As a novice, I did all sorts of odd jobs, even getting the coffee for the coffee breaks. While getting only lunch money for my efforts, I did get a world of valuable experience. At home I spent many hours making suitable samples for future presentations. After some time later, when I thought my work was suitable, I applied for work at Timely Comics (Marvel's former name). I was most fortunate in being hired on a staff basis. I was almost immediately assigned to ink Jack Kirby's pencils on Captain America. My career in comics had started.

Sometime later after Jack Kirby left Timely for other ventures, Al Avison took over C.A. pencils and I continued the inking chores. Subsequently, after Al left, I started penciling Cap from then on until the Army decided it could use my services to help win World War II. It seemed they needed a lot of men for the infantry at the time. I was called up, and so my artistic eye was used to qualify me as an expert marksmen in an infantry regiment. Curiously it was the same regiment that Jack Kirby was in. We never saw each other in combat, and only recently did we find out that we were both in the same outfit!

After being wounded in France, and flown to England for hospitilization I was transferred to a convalescent hospital in Warwick, England. I was given a pass one week-end and hobbled to town to see the sights. And wouldn't you know it! There, staring me in the face from a newsstand was a Captain America comic book. It sure was a touch of home and brought back pleasant memories.

After the war, I came back to comics in a free lance capacity, although I did most of my work for Timely. In 1957, there was a recession in the comic book industry and I was forced to look elsewhere for work. I entered the magazine illustration field. I did illustrations for the Men's Adventure type magazines until 1967.

After things picked up again in the comic field I hastened back again to my first love, comics! I hope to be in it for a long time to come.

PART 2, next issue

PROJECT REPAY

PAT JANSON · 85 Hemlock Rd. · Cranston, R.I. · 02910

MIKE CHERNEY & JIM MENDELSON, Assistants

PROGRESS REPORT FOUR

A short time ago I never quite dreamed that, while writing this Progress Report, I would be looking for a new name that would better fit Project Repay.

Although I have known that there was, perhaps, no better suited title, I just had to seek one more descriptive adjective. Now, after some short deliberation, I believe that I have found it, with an assist from you...

SUCCESSFUL!

That's it! The one last adjective that we needed so badly to add to Project Repay. Hence forth, when thinking about PR, always think in terms of "Successful Project Repay".

Yes, thanks to countless people like you, Project Repay is continuously growing larger and larger with each new and prosperous day. As of July 17, the treasury holds a total of $47.15, already minus $4 for the following subscriptions; an increase of $23.15 since last time around!

Needless to say, I am most pleased with these sup—risingly pleasant results, and I'm very proud of my new and capable staff: MIKE CHERNEY and JIM MENDELSON.

Obviously, our financial situation is certainly in good condition, to say the least; but please remember that contributions are always necessary if we are to succeed further and continue to grow to greater expectations.

Our most prolific contributor, who, by himself, is most responsible for the sudden rise, is my own assistant, Mike Cherney. Mike, in less than a month, has contributed the sum of $12! Of course, you all cannot be expected to give so much, but surely you can find it in yourselves to spare that extra dollar or two each month. Come on! We're off the launch pad now get us into orbit!

From our financial news to the real pleasantries --- this months' recipients to Marvel subscriptions:

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FPO San Fransisco, California 96602

and

Sgt. Samuel Pixler, Hg. Co. 4th Marines
APO San Fransisco, California 96602

Pvt. Simpkins will receive a sub to Iron Man, while Sgt. Pixler will be entertained by Captain America.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Project Repay could also use assistance in other ways besides monetary, such as plugs in other zines and, most important, recognition and aid from Marvel, National, etc.

We would very much like to advertise in RB*CC, which, as you know, has a tremendous print run and readership. However, again it is a matter of having the necessary funds available. We do not want to use the subscription money for such, so we would like to establish a special treasury fund for such related purposes. Therefore, if you would also like to assist us in these matters as well, please send all contributions along with your normal donations, specifying the purpose of each. Remember, we need your support.

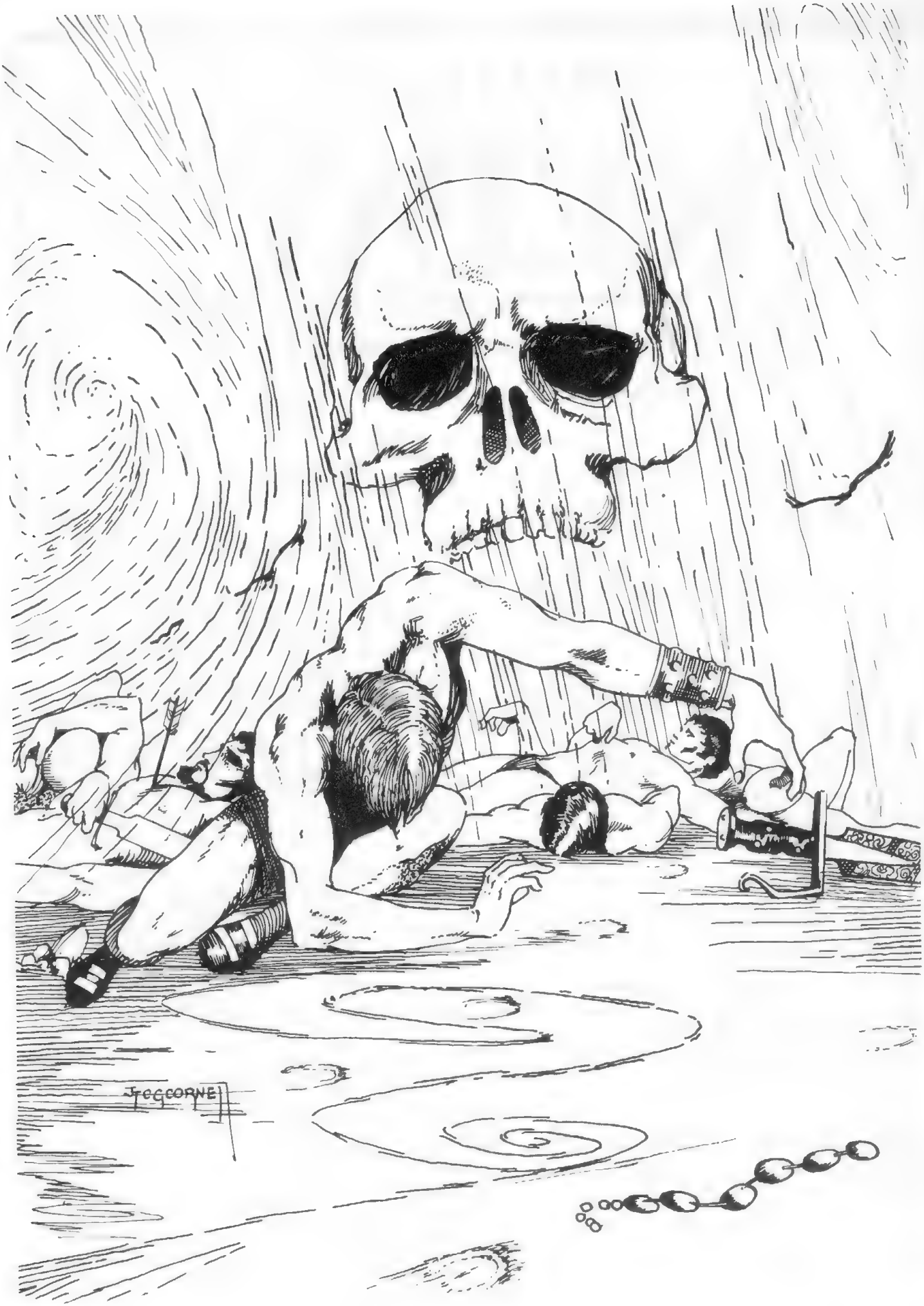
If our resident editor, Gary, will consent to this next idea, and I'm sure he will, each serviceman will become better informed about fandom and our work. I would, under Mike's suggestion, very much like to send along an issue of FF with each new sub. The men would probably enjoy the copies which will, as previously stated, give them better insight as to what actually is going on.

Mike has already taken care of that chore for this issue, having purchased two copies and sent them out (# 11's), but it would be great if Gary could donate the issues each time. What say you, Gary? ((I'll send out as many copies of FF as we have recipients along with the regular subscription mailing. I'll do as much as I can to help out such a worthy cause. -- Gary)).

Here is a new fund raising idea. . .

Have you ever noticed just how many comic dealers there are cluttering the mail-ways attempting to fill their wallets? Most make a fortune.

This process could easily work for Project Repay. We could sell fan donated comics at low prices by having a price list of Project Repay Items (the PR "items" don't have to be soley comics - they could be original art, fanzines, etc.) Write and let us know what you think.


J.EGGORNE

Half hidden by the purple mists that also obscured night-shrouded mountains, the moon hung low in the east. Soft wind wispered vagrantly across the shadow-dotted plain, playing briefly about the still, blood-spattered bodies. The battle had been long and vicious; now the defeated lay in grotesque postures of death. The victors had taken pains to see that none of the vanquished would ever live to fight again.

Ganon surveyed the plain through half-closed eyes. From where he had fallen, amid the convulsing bodies of his friends, hours before, the warrior thanks Oahl -- God of War -- that he had been left for dead. Now, right leg almost severed by the powerful swing of a gory battle axe, and right arm broken in three places by the wicked blow of a spiked mace, he sought painfully to extricate himself from the tangled pile of corpses. His left wrist, also, was disjointed as a result of the fall he had taken from his horse.

Alas, such misfortune would not have befallen him, had he retained his grip on the fabled Nahlom, Sword of Eternal Strength. But in suprise at the fall of his close friend, Nomah, he had momentarily relaxed his hold. It had been knocked from his hand, to fall beyond his reach. And then it seemed as if all the weapons of the attacking Anyal had fallen on him at once. He had been fortunate to land among the bodies, but unfortunate in that his steed had half-trampled him before running off across the plain.

He struggled now to reach fallen Nahlmon. Could he but close his numb and bloodied fingers on that carven hilt, the strength eternal would again be his. He must be successful --- he would be successful --- for was it not written in the Prophesies of Time that a hero would come out of the north, bearing the name Ganon, to wield the Sword of Eternal Strength.

Wearily, wracked with pain convulsions, he resolutely crawled toward the point where he knew the weapon lay. A spasm of pain travelled the length of his spine, and for a long moment he rested, gasping fitfully. He had no doubts that the sword remained where it had fallen, for it was written that none in this age could heft it save himself, Ganon. The gods had granted him the opportunity to save a world, but it was his duty to turn that possibility into reality.

Inch by inch, foot by slow foot, the warrior dragged himself forward across the blood soaked ground. The Sword possessed fiery powers, and he could yet force it to work for him --- to heal him -- so that the prophecy might be fullfilled. Ganon, their champion against the encroaching darkness of barbarianism.

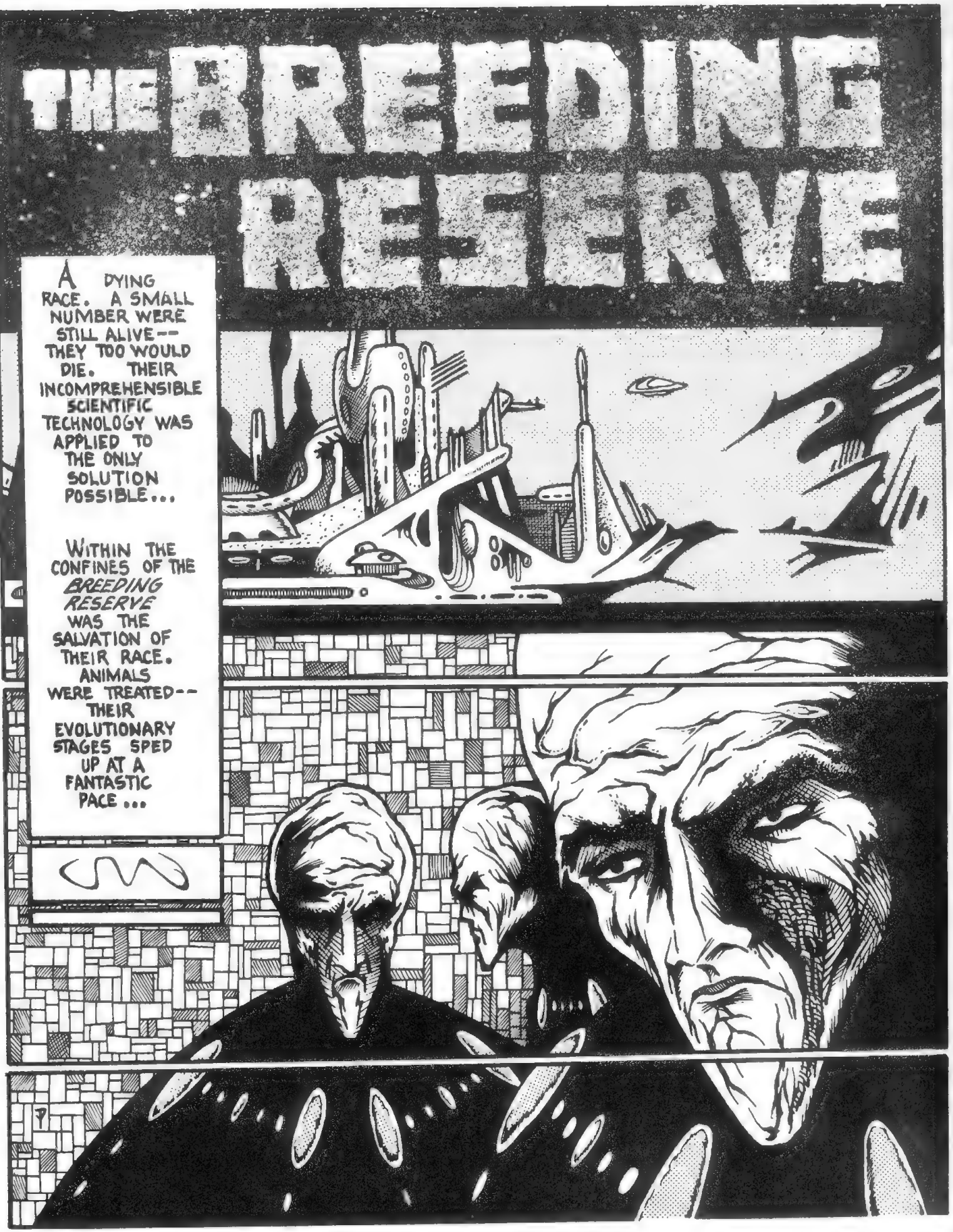
Searing pain as real as the raw edge of a dagger tore through his breast. He coughed, and blood bubbled through his lips to fall in drops of froth. The Sword of Eternal Strength beckoned to him, glinting like a star-shot jewel. His destiny lay before him, and he reached out to sieze it. But his fingers hung motionless in the still air; both arms were broken, and Ganon could not close either of his hands upon the hilt.

Sorrowfully, he sank his head in his arms and wept. His pained body shook with paroxyms, and again he coughed, this time a rich red pool. Then, at last, he closed his eyes and was still.

THE BREEDING RESERVE

A DYING RACE. A SMALL NUMBER WERE STILL ALIVE-- THEY TOO WOULD DIE. THEIR INCOMPREHENSIBLE SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGY WAS APPLIED TO THE ONLY SOLUTION POSSIBLE...

WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE *BREEDING RESERVE* WAS THE SALVATION OF THEIR RACE. ANIMALS WERE TREATED-- THEIR EVOLUTIONARY STAGES SPED UP AT A FANTASTIC PACE...



THE BREEDING RESERVE

MAN IS A VICIOUS CREATURE -- HE DEVELOPES THE MOST DEMON-LIKE WEAPONS, AND THE *FOOL,* MAN, TAKES PRIDE IN HIS KILLING AND WARRING ABILITIES. SO IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE *ELDERS* TO CONTROL HIM...

THE *ELDERS* WOULD DIE SOON, BUT THEY WERE RAISING THE SEED THAT WOULD ONCE AGAIN POPULATE THE GALAXY...

END

2/25/10

KIM NIKOSKI

THE BUMMER
HOLEY SHAMOLEY! IT'S JIM STRENKO FAMOUS TOP CARTOONIST-ILLUSTRATOR!
EX-EXCUSE ME, PLEASE, BUT ARE YOU JIM STRENKO — THE FAMOUS, GREAT, WONDERFUL CARTOONIST ILLUSTRATOR N'ALL-'ROUND NEAT GUY !?
WHY, AH, YES IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING..
GOLLYGEE! JIM STRENKO! GEE, SIR, I MEAN GOLLY, IT'S AN HONOR— THAT IS A PRIVILIGE TO BEHOLD THESE HUMBLE EYES ON YOUR PERSON!
OH, COME NOW...
NO SIR— YES SIR— I HAVE EVERY PUBLISHED ART YOU'VE EVER DONE! YOU ARE WITHOUT MASTER OR EQUAL!
OH, REALLY?
I WONDER IF YOU COULD— WOULD.. IF I COULD— THAT IS...
WHAT IS IT? OUT WITH IT MAN!
WELL, C'N YOU GIMME A PIECE OF YOUR ART..... ...ORIGINAL?
SOMETHING TO SHOW MY GRANDCHILDREN SOMEDAY!!!
WHY, SURE, SUCH A LOYAL, DEVOTED FAN 'N' LOVER OF GOOD ART— HERE'S A SKETCH I DID FOR THE CAPT. MIRICLE SERIES!
THANKS PAL!
HEYYA, HEYYA- GIT YA RED-HOT STRENKO ORIGINAL ART ONLY $20!
!!
STRENKO
-HANLEY 7-70

Editor's Note-- I hope the letter col this issue will live up to the "New & Improved" blurb above. The first improvement, of course is greater reduction - and I also felt that last issues letter col was a bit too long, therefore this issues is "half sized" four pages. Thirdly is the lack of art decorations, and spot illustrations in the letter col, and lastly the new manner in which the answers are presented. On to our first letter...

T. Casey Brennan
Avoca, Michigan

Dear Gary:

I enjoyed Fantastic Fanzine Special # 1 immensely. I haven't ordered many 'zines since the very early sixties...and these days it always comes as a suprise to find such quality in so-called amatuer publications!

Thanks too for the script-writers' guide for The Guardsmen of Infinity. All I can say is that if I find the time, I'll try to turn out a script for you. I'm delighted to see a 'zine put so much emphasis on the quality of their scripts. Too many faneds are fond of accepting shoddy scripts, and then leaving everything up to the artist -- which is very unfair indeed.

Something which may interest your readers: I've been trying some very experimental scripts for the Warren mags.....a sort of warped psychological drama, rather than straight horror. The first of this type - "Death of a Stranger" - appeared in Creepy # 31. I also did a sequel called "Epitaph For A Stranger" coming up soon, if not already, in Creepy, Eerie, or Vampi. Another such piece is called "The Way Home", but I'm afraid I don't know which mag it will be coming in, or when. As I said, these stories are quite experimental, and I don't really know how they are going over with the readers. I'm sure the opinions of Fantastic Fanzine readers would be of immeasurable value to Warren Editor, Bill Parente, and to me.

I've also been selling some shock-horror text stories to an anti-drug magazine called Listen. I've tried to write these in the same style as the early EC's..... that is, to blast the reader out of his shoes with emotion. Two such tales are "Childhood's End" coming, I believe, in the July Listen, and "Death Of a Pusher" coming, I believe, in the October Listen. Those who'd like to purchase these issues can send 35¢ per copy to Listen, 6840 Eastern Avenue, NW Washington DC 20012. But, be sure to specify you want the issue or issues containing "Childhood's End" and/or "Death Of A Pusher". The reason being, I'm not entirely sure they'll be in those precise issues.

Thanks for all the entertainment, Gary & co., and I

hope I'll be able to do some work for you soon!

R. D. Harwood
Boston Lincolnshire, England

Dear Gary,

This is basically an LOC on FF 11. I don't know how many (if any) other English fans are able to read your fine zine, certainly I've never seen any letters printed from this side of the Atlantic puddle. So, I thought you might be interested to see what an English fan thinks of American fan work.

One aspect of American Fandom that disturbs me slightly is the apparent awe displayed with regard to professionals. The general attitude seems to be "If it's professional, it must be good" -- something I can't agree with. Take for example the Steranko art this issue. OK, so it was good. But none of the drawings were better than could have been produced by a reasonably good fan artist. It was a pity he didn't ink the Talon drawings - the ones in Witzend # 5 were much better. No, I don't mean to say that Jim Steranko is a bad artist; on the contrary, he is one of my favorites. It's just that these examples of his work weren't particularly impressive. Professionals - even when they are good enough to contribute to fan mags are not above criticism, and should be treated like any other contributor.

Anyway, the interview was excellent, informative and absorbing. Steranko did come across a little too self confident and at some times almost conceited, perhaps he has reason to be. Intelligent, articulate, honest (if at times somewhat outspoken); these are all Jim Steranko. But Steranko's character is not really what concerns us fans -- we are more concerned with his art (Well, I am). Though some aspect of Steranko's art do not appeal to me, the imagination he displays in layout (especially), coloring, and storytelling prove him a master of the comics media, giving us a glimpse of what comic art could be like, given half a chance.

Although most of FF's artists compare favorably with Britain's best, I have one major criticism, this being that American fan art is usually more derivative than ours. Of course a lot of British fan art is derivative, but our best artists possess styles that are unmistakenly their own, and often produces work that equals and even surpasses that of their professional counterparts.

Fantucchio is undeniably a very fine artist in his own right, so I don't really know why he bothered to take great pain to copy Kirby's style. Personally, I'm not keen on Kirby (Gasp! Shock! Sacrilege..!) though I acknowledge the importance of his contribution to modern comic art.

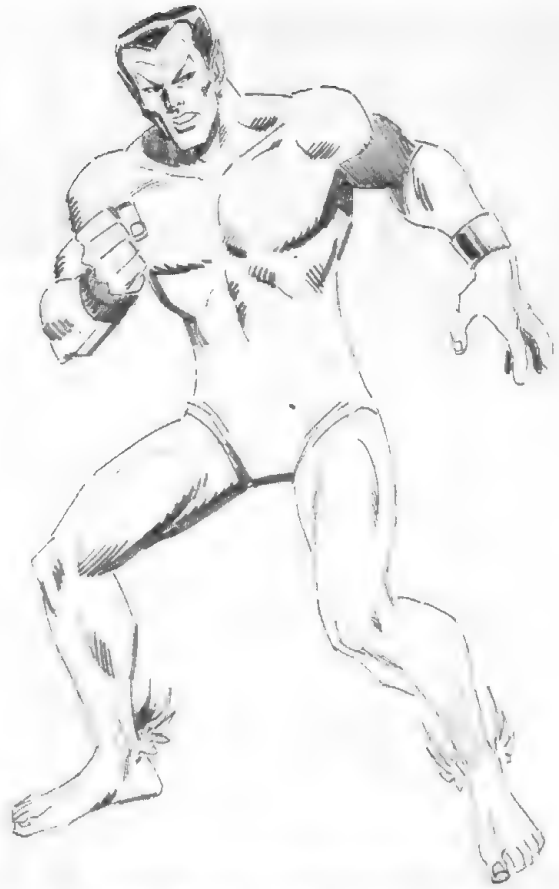
Dave Cockrum produces good work, without ever achieving anything startling or original. It's difficult to criticise his work, nor is it really necessary. His centerspread was very good; nice to see not everyone has forgotten the excellence that was once THUNDER Agents. If I have one complaint about Dave's work, it's that he uses a brush too much. This doesn't affect the quality of Dave's work, though - he'll make a good professional.

A welcome addition to the FF art staff is Robert Kline. The full page caricature was brilliant as was the Ka-Zar full pager! I like very much his line technique and more use of pen.

Dave Russell and Jay Mike are both very competent artists. It's a shame they find the need to imitate someone else's style -- the legs of Mike's and Russell's characters were almost painfully alike.

Worthy of note were your two newcomers, John Cornell and John Richardson. Hopefully we'll see more of them in the future.

I think most fans are as concerned with the artist himself as they are with his art. At least I am. I thought John made clear why he copied the Kirby style in his caption directly below his Mr. Fantastic drawing. he was saluting Kirby's genuis that produced 100 successful issues of the Fantastic Four. You should be happy to know that Dave Cockrum has reached prodom now!



I think you'll be happy to know, R. D., that we have quite a few subscribers across the Atlantic in merry 'ol England; as well as in Belguim, Sweden, Austrailia, Italy, Denmark, Germany, France, Spain, and Argentina!

Dave Hogan
6400 Center Street # 50
Mentor, Ohio 44060

Dear Gary:

FF 11's cover was lovely in its simplicity, and was one of the best pieces I've seen by Steranko. I wish the pro mags would cool it with the often garish covers and come up with something subtle as you did.

I'm much impressed with FF's featured fan artists, especially Cockrum and Kline. Kline's illo for Running Mate was excellent; the problem of foreshortening on the foreground sub-human was handled beautifully. Running Mate was nicely written, though it was arkward in spots.

The Steranko Interview gave me an insight into a dynamic personality. I believe it's essential for a creative individual to be committed to his craft, but I hope Steranko doesn't get burned, financially, because of his strong principles and determination...

Grey Spaces doesn't come off. It was fairly entertaining, but frankly, "deep" theories regarding fictional characters are not too good an idea.

The Campaign to revise the Code is a great idea, but let's face it: The major part of all comics sales are to little kids, not to us older and more mature fans. Personally, I'd like to see the Code chucked altogether, not to encourage an onslaught of blood and bosoms, but to encourage some healthy and much-needed competition. The field is now dominated by the two big houses and a few smaller ones. Man, the industry is stagnating and it needs a push! I see the fear of potentially dangerous rivals as the only answer. The publishers seem to be satisfied with their declining sales, so it's a sure bet that they aren't going to

1950's Cap and his enigmatic shield and a quite plausible one (plotwise). However, this type of thing belongs in the Marvel lettercols; perhaps such missives might bring some semblance of dignity to them. Of course, I can't really say I blame Joe Fan for not wanting anything with his name on it placed among all the B.C. (not Before Steranko!) penned by the 12 year olds.

The art was, for the most part, good, with the exception of Rinehart, whose art was the worst in the mag, and who has no business whatsoever on the FF's art staff, and O'Neal, whose style is just not sophistacated enough to warrant inclusion of his art in today's FF (nothing personal, Mike...) On layout, the Leroy Lettering made for a neat appearance and should be used on a permanent basis in much the same capacity as it was used on this issue. I'm looking forward to more art by THE Dr. John Richardson, Doug Rice and Carter Scholz. Jay's back cover was real nice; screening and half-toning made for a fantastic appearance.

Oh -- I said I'd justify my criticism of Alter Ego. Nothing wrong with the mag itself (how could there be?) but the editor's attitude toward fans turns me off. Re read his opening editorial of AE 10 and notice; it boils down to: "My henchmen and I are the only people in fandom who know what a fanzine should be like. Now all the rest of you, all you little neo's, just shell out your five beans for a sub and let us show you how it's supposed to be done." Well, Mr. Thomas, sir, Dwight Decker said something once and I'll say it again: FANDOM IS FOR FANS. And that's where FF comes in. A pro-looking book BY and FOR fans.

One last note: The columns looked much neater this time; keep it up. And I hope the 52 page format remains; I'll be glad to shell out 75¢ for that size FF with all the written material it contains. Peace, and remember:

STERANKO FOREVER!

You know it, Jim! I'm rather anxious to read AE 11's lettercol to see what other fans' reactions were to Roy's editorial. Although I doubt Roy actually meant it like that, I agree with you, generally, about the content of his editorial. As I mentioned before, if you liked Bill's story last ish, just wait'll you read his two stories next issue!

Charles Schreck
El Paso, Illinois 61738

Dear Gary:

As I compare earlier issues of Fantastic Fanzine to # 11, I am impressed by the improvement. Where before there was only fair art, there is now great art by Fantucchio, Cockrum, Steranko, and Kline. Where before there was uninteresting writing, there is now in-depth, intelligent writing. You've taken what was once a fair zine and made it a potentially great one! Although not yet on a level with Graphic Story Magazine, Gosh Wow!, or Spa Fon, FF is becoming one of the best offset zines around. FF is now one of the few zines I look for with anticipation.

I'll skip useless reviews-of-contents. Observations: The Steranko Interview was equal to the fine Steranko Interview in Spa Fon. Doing it live is the only way to do it right.

Steranko Checklist. I have been working on a similar project for a while now, so I appreciate the difficulty you must have had compiling it. Your index wasn't a complete checklist as you forgot to mention his fanzine work, his work for Harvey, and his coloring for Marvel. And if you want to be really complete one should include all reprints of panels and such.

For the record, did Steranko color the cover to FF 11 (all three colors)??

Running Mate. This fiction is much, much better than Cantey's previous stuff. Cantey is now one of the few fans who have mastered the elements of the short story.

Congratulations on a good job. I'm so impressed with FF 11, not because it is so good (I usually expect that in an offset zine) but because of the improvement you've made.

The Steranko Checklist was compiled in a hurry, and I did leave a few things out. Inlcuding Jim's cover on The Hulk Annual # 1, which many FF readers reminded me of.

I'd like to express my appreciation to Bob Kline for cutting the color overlays for last issues cover.

Thanks for your vote of confidence, Charles.

"QUOTES"

JOHN STEFL

I enjoyed your magazine very much. The Steranko Interview was brilliant. I do not know if you have issue 10 of Alter Ego but the interview with Gil Kane was just a bit over my head. Your interview with Steranko was much more intelligible. The critiques were somehow lacking in something. I found the Marvel/National battle rather trite and meaningless past a certain point and Gordon Matthews' rationalization of his article was nothing short of moronic. We should not concern ourselves with which company an artist works for when the column is an art critique. I also came away from the other critiques less than satisfied but I cannot say what they lacked. It may just be my own inexperience which was to blame.

DON LUSKIN

I just now heard of Project Repay and would like to comment on it.

Certainly no lives need a little joy desperately as those of the poor young men trapped in the military service of the United States. In this sense, your motives are honorably, even laudable since a Marvel Fan in Cambodia would certainly feela little more at home with a copy of the Avengers in his footlocker, or a Daredevil in his backpack.

My objections begin in Fantastic Fanzine Club Memos Bonus of issue # 11, you call this operation "just a way of saying 'thanks' to all of our guys overseas fighting for us." First of all, they do not deserve our thanks, but our sympathy, because the only place where they are actually fighting are Vietnam and Cambodia and in those instances they're not fighting for us but to preserve the sort of regime we fought a war over 25 years ago to wipe out.

Are we indeed defending democracy in Vietnam? In America, a Democratic Republic, our leaders are selected by popular vote. In Vietnam, the opposition is not voted down, but imprisoned. This sort of selection process is not called democracy. It's called facism. It's the same sort of facism that we are getting dangerously close to on campuses like Kent State; the same sort we hear in Sprio Agnew's voice when he says in his new book, Frankly Speaking, "I believe in constitutional dissent... But I do not believe that demonstrations, lawful or unlawful merit my approval or even my silence." When a brilliant man like Justice William O'Douglas steps to the fore and says, "Enough!" certain men in Congress decide it's time to impeach Mr. Justice O'Douglas.

So, let's not say they're fighting for us, because they're not. They're fighting for creeping facism at the commands of bureaucrats who sit safely behind Washington desks while our men fire Tungsten shells into the Vietnam landscape, made from the mineral which financially justifies our Southeast Asian

act on their own. Be careful how you conduct the Campaign as I'm sure there exists any number of Frederic Werthams, waiting in the wings with jaws foaming, eager to strike.

The cover to Fantastic Fanzine 11 was All-Steranko; Jim explained exactly what type-face to use in the logo, and where to place it. I can't claim any credit for it's simplicity --- and have to agree: it was one of the most beautiful figure drawings I've ever seen! But if the cover design was left up to me, I think I would've handled it similar to the way it was done.

Paul Rew
116 Adalia Avenue
Tampa, Fla. 33606

Dear Gary:

Number 11 was your best effort so far. I was surprised at the sudden jump in quality. Steranko must really enthuse you. I am not going to praise every article. I don't feel up to it. I will, instead, get my feelings down on paper. I have everything that Steranko has done for comics since he got into Marvel. I never even knew of his work for Harvey! I had to get duplicates of some of his books because I read the first copies so much that the staples wore out, and the pages got ragged. Steranko influenced my own art work so much that I was accused of borrowing from him. I idolized him as the greatest talent in the business. I am very bitter over him now. I think he has copped out on us. It's all well and good for Frazetta to paint all he wants, because he is not a great comic book artist. He has no real ZAP on the paneled page. But Steranko - Ye Gods! He is a genuis on the paneled page! He has had the greatest single impact on the modern comic scene. I don't doubt that he was the source for Neal Adams' inspired panel arrangements. Barry Smith too! He may do well as a cover painter, but I'll hate him for it because it will mean the end of his comic work. I may never even buy a Steranko cover. Extreme actions for extreme feelings. I will regret the passing of Steranko for many years. I seem to have run out of steam. I can't seem to sustain any sort of violent emotions; too lazy for the effort, I suppose. I guess that rabid diatribe was enough. I will say that I enjoyed your eleventh issue muchly and hope to see its equal in # 12.

I liked Bill Cantey's story, The Self Made Minute Man (printed in FF 8*9), it was a real gut twister. The others have lacked its punch. I was also pleased to see the work of Robert Kline in your book. I have really been impressed by the work he did for Anomaly and would like to see more. As for Dave Cockrum - he gets better every issue!! You have quite a battery of new artists. Jay Mike....he has my problem; he is a derivative of Steranko. He is good, though and I would like to see some storyboard work by him. Why hasn't the FF ever run a strip? I would love to see Mike or Cockrum try a strip. It would be a cool addition to your magazine.

The last time I wrote you, I berated you for Fantucchio's rather pointless nude. I have changed my mind. Put all the naked girls you want in the book but have Kline draw them; I dig his kind of women. I think I will sign off on that rather eratic note.

Although Steranko has stopped working for the commercial comic book companies (Marvel, National etc.), Steranko HAS NOT left the comic media. Steranko is producing his own comic strips and has started his own publishing firm to produce comic strips that are unhindered by the Code: unhindered by editorial hang-ups, and COMPLETELY uncensored. The first book will be TALON, which will be out soon. No, Steranko hasn't deserted us. And if you pick up a copy of The Steranko History of Comics, you'll see what he's been doing for fandom for the past few months.

Jim Wilson

P.O. Box 15
Alpharetta, Ga. 30201

Dear Gary:

In what must be the most incredible metamorphis in fanzine history, FF has risen from a textbook example of a typical crudzine to an utterly mind-blowing experience. My God, FF 11 was THE best fan magazine I've ever seen this year, BAR NONE! FF has arrived! FF is what's happening! FF, the imaginitive, slick yet fannish, utterly top-flight mag, is definitely where it's at! NOT the senseless malange of the RBCC, NOT the supposedly ultimate, overrated Alter Ego, (I'll justify that later), but today's FF. FF 11 blew my mind. How? It happened like this. . .

You look at FF 11 for the first time and immediately see a Steranko cover. You notice that the colors, the typeset, dignified title head, the perfectly balanced, symmetrical, almost poetic figure all combine to produce one of the most striking covers you've ever seen, immeasurably superior to 95% of the covers appearing on pro mags. You remind yourself to tell Gary to use that slick paper for covers from now on; it is far better than that used on FF 10. You open the mag, and your eyes are assaulted by a beautiful Fantucchio illo --- John's unique inks made the drawing a delight although you see that the pose was borrowed from the cover of Fantastic Four # 59. Turn the page and you are promised a Steranko folio. By now the adrenalin has built up in you until your hands shake, though it's dulled a bit by the Kline, illo, which you see is one of his worst. Slowly turn the page and all-of-a-sudden: Steranko in all his glory! You pour over the 3 pages until every beautiful line is forever etched in your memory. Then, excited as you already are, your excitement is increased a hundredfold by: THE STERANKO INTERVIEW!

You begin reading until you are thoroughly immersed in Steranko's thoughts and philosophy, resisting the urge to wander around aimlessly while reading muttering "This is good...this is good..." As you read the words spoken by this greatest of all graphic storytellers, you are permeated throughout with an exhuberent feeling toughly analogous to that of winning a high-stakes gambling game despite impossible odds.

You continue on through the mag, and that exhuberence lasts until you finally --- reluctantly --- close the back cover of the book. You ask, how does the FF staff manage to come up with, issue after issue, their elegant mixture of excitement and entertainment?

Talent is an obvious answer. The work of the staff is great; the technical production is smooth and imaginative; the articles are well written by fans who both understand and enjoy what they do. The art of the zine (which provides the entire stock-in-trade of roughly comparable and competing fanzines) does indeed form a vital part of the zine, but it is used as a supplement to the text, rather than leaned on, which seems to make all the difference. And in this particular issue, there is a virtuoso performance by a guest starring pro: Jim Steranko. And since I am a registered, card carrying Steranko fan addict, I wouldn't have it any other way! And I recall with pleasure that the very last remnant of FF's days as a crudzine (The Search) was missing. In respect to the Graphic Critique, Howe's infuriated me. He actually put down Steranko for his use of filmic techniques and not for using the same formula as do his associates. My God! Every hack artist in existence uses art that resembles a series of schematic drawings to tell stories! Steranko's use of subtle touches that expanded your awareness of the world into which Steranko led you was what made Steranko's stories the poetic masterpieces that they were! "Exasperating?" Mr. Howe, I fear, is so used to the old worn out method of grinding out graphic stories that he seems unable to fully appreciate style or touch of uniqueness. When I first read, "The Artist Steranko", I thought how dare he put down Jim Steranko's innovations in the graphic medium; how dare he!

Running Mate is the best Cantey piece since The Self Made Minuteman. The increased length helped, as did the Kline and Cockrum illoes. In Grey Spaces, Bill presented a rather ingenious explanation of the

prescence. Let's support our servicemen, who, now more than ever, need a little joy in their lives, but let's not affect any of this "saving the world for democracy" talk.

DAVE KASAKOVE

In the article, "The Steranko Dimension" Gordon Matthews wrote "In the years B.S. (Before Steranko, not Bull Shit) panels were drawn as squares, with an occasional rectangle which was avoided as much as possible. Well, Steranko came along and saw this tradition was a lot of B.S. (Bull Shit, not Before Steranko) and that it hindered the artists' style, so he said to hell with it, and thirty years of tradition was flushed down the toilet."

This statement is completely incorrect no matter how you look at it. First of all, if Gordon meant Before Steranko to be from the 1930's on, then the garbage he said pertaining to the square panels is pure Bull Shit. In the 1940's comic book panels were drawn much "wierder" than the way Steranko has ever drawn them. In the 40's the artists used circles and many other unamable shapes as their panels.

If Gordon meant Before Steranko to mean from 1960 on, he is again wrong. In the 60's the panels were drawn in a rather conservative way (squares, rectangles), you can't possibly say, however, that Steranko was first to bring back "wierd" panels in the 60's. After all, hasn't Gene Colan been drawing "wierd" panels since his days as Adam Austin? Do I make my point?

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST ——

JIM STERANKO
Reading, Pa. 19607

Gary:

My thanks to you and Bob Kline, John Cornell, Gordon Matthews, Bill Cantey, Richard Howe and the irrepressible Dwight Decker for the superb tribute in Fantastic Fanzine 11. I have, of course, had considerable reaction about my comments from fandom to Stan Lee. It all proves, perhaps, the popularity of your publication and my reputation as a troublemaker. I have heard, however, that Marty Greim is initiating a contest in Comic Crusader that challenges readers to find a paragraph without an error in spelling. Allow me to correct a few other mistakes evident: from your introduction -- my work for Harvey Comics was limited exclusively to scripts, not art. My Captain America tales were, on the other hand, written by Stan Lee over my plots (the idea of reinstating Rick Jones as another Bucky was Stan's directive). Talon will be available exclusively from SUPERGRAPHICS and the History of Comics now costs $3.25, and includes hundreds of comic art reproductions from the original books and magazines, not, as you reported, done by me. Three Wildcat O'Shea paperback covers by me were published by Berkley-Medallion in addition to Warlocks And Warriors (hard and soft bound); from Lancer, Master Of The Dark Gate, Infinity Two, Lord Of Blood, The Mighty Swordsmen and Masters Of The Pit. Again, congratulations on a fine publication. I'll be looking forward with anticipation to your next issue. Until then, take care.

Sincerely,

Steranko

ON THE POLITICAL FRONT; THE COMIC CODE

by DONALD R. RICHARDS

As I promised, I have looked into the political approach to the idea of changing the comics code. When I first started, I had assumed that there had been some law passed that had forced the comics to have this code. In short order, I found that Congress had little or nothing to do with the code. Rather, it was the publishers themselves that got together and formed the code.

Also, when I talked to various people on revising the code, the general impression I got was that they didn't think that the code should be changed. They believed that the code is keeping pornography out of comics, and if the code was abolished or changed, the blood and sex minded publishers would move into the field, if not now, perhaps later. Of course, our voting parents would take a dim view of any politicians who helped put pornography into the hands of their children.

As a result, unless there is an overwhelming support by the people or a strong lobby developed, we can expect no help from Congress. But, through my conversations, I have been able to draw up a proposed plan of action.

Primarily, a lobby should be developed, a lobby that would work not only in Washington, but also at home. A National Chairman of the Campaign should be elected by those willing to work in the Campaign. To help the National Chairman, state committees should be formed, composed of willing volenteers in all states, and each state committee would have a chairman, who would report directly to the National Chairman, who would also be in charge of directing operations in that state. Once this basic structure would be formed, the Campaign would be off to a flying start. Not only would the National Chairman of a list of willing volenteers to work with, but he would also know his strength, and could direct the campaign better. Once such a lobby would be formed, the next step would be to start some pressures on the right people. One such group would be the ones we should have gone after in the first place, the publishers, the guys who started the code. Stan Lee is said to be waivering. If, say on some day we decide upon, Stan gets literally thousands of post cards from all over the country asking him to take Marvel out from the code - wouldn't he be influenced enough to do so? Supposing also, that Carmine Infantino and other editors and publishers got the same treatment, on the same day, can you see what effect it would have? But to have such pressures brought to bear, we need an organization to work with. Sure, the committee is doing alright, and Duffy's a good guy and all that. But remember 1964. Goldwater went to the crass roots, and got the little people for him, while Rocky got the big shots, and do you recall who got the nomination? Goldwater, that's who. We can take lessons from politicians. Wasn't it John Kennedy who spent years travelling and collecting names, so that when he did run for President he had thousands of names and workers to help him? The National Chairman can run an effective Campaign to get the code changed, if we try this method.

One other thing we need to decide upon: What changes are needed? Each person probably wants different changes, so we must decide, together, what changes we need and want, once we do that, we should give each volenteer a copy of our revisions so that when he speaks to a group of fans he knows what changes we all want. Also, we should have fans at each comicon eating, breathing, and speaking of revising the code. If we can accomplish this, and have a few petitions or several thousand names gathered, we have a start.

To get the ball rolling, I am prepared to help start a committee for Pennsylvanians. If there are any of you out there, and willing to volenteer and interested in starting a state committee, let me know. I plan to put out a ditto zine with names of all volenteers, but I have to have it done soon, so please hurry.

Donald R. Richards
Big Cove Tannery, Pa. 17212

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

CCA REVISAL CAMPAIGN

PROGRESS REPORT 3

DUFFY VOHLAND, CHAIRMAN · CLEVENGER HALL · BALL STATE UN. · MUNCIE, IND. · 47306

I've really got a lot of good news (and some not so good) to report this time, so hold on to your glomis (or whatever)! Before I get to the news and other subjects, I want to mention the people who sent in money and the amount each one sent: (Note: Anyone who sent in money for the Campaign's cause after July 15th will be mentioned next ish):

Mike Kopala:	$2.00	Doyal Morgan:	$1.00
Charles Meister:	$ .50	Dave Hartman:	$ .50
Jim Wilson:	$1.50	Kathy Morisette:	$2.00
Kenneth Kraft:	$1.75	Jay Seckels:	$1.00
Ron Chusid:	$1.00	Fans in Ken's area:	*$3.25
Duffy Vohland:	$ .50	?	*$2.00

* Ken Kraft had a fire at his house which destroyed the records that told who had sent him money and how much, so when he wrote me he said the $3.25 was approximately the amount he had collected. So, for you fans in Ken's area who aren't getting your de—served recognition -- thanx! Your help is muchly a-ppreciated!

And as for the question mark with the $2.00 after it, I don't know where it came from. After adding up the money, and finding out we had $17.00 in the "kitty", I tried to find out where the other two dollars came from with no luck. So, if I'm leaving anybody's name out, I'm sorry.

Everyone say "good-bye" to Ken Kraft as a member of the Revisal Committee; Ken has decided to turn his position over to someone else with the thought that somebody with more free time could devote a larger part of it to the Campaign than Ken could. I'm sorry to see him go, but some people do have more important things to do with their time than being involved in fandom constantly. (A situation I'm afraid I may find myself in beginning this september when I start my first year in college.)

To take Ken's place I've chosen a fan whom I think is a very competent replacement and a very hard worker - Donald R. Richards. He already has several ideas to help the Campaign (see opposite page). So from now on anyone in the folowing states should address all Campaign-oriented letters to Donald: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Massechusetts, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvannia, and Maryland. His address: Big Cove Tannery, Penn-sylvannia, 17212. Write him.

The biggest news I have to report this time, and the thing that, if all goes well, should all-but-positiv-ely mean the success of the Campaign, is the possib-ility of support from the newly organized Academy of Comic Arts (ACBA). While at the New York Comic Art Convention, I talked to Neal Adams, the vice presi-dent of ACBA, and he said we had a good chance of getting their backing because almost all, if not all, comic professionals feel the code definitely needs an up-dating! So, if we can get a revised set of Code rules written up soon and present them to ACBA, and if they approve of the changes, they could be our "professional representatives" when we finally get a-round to presenting it to the Comics Code Authority. Hopefully I'll have their answer, whether pro or con, in my next Progress Report.

Another "group" who said they would probably support us if we get ACBA's backing is Marvelmania Monthly Magazine. I met Mark Evanier, editor of MMM, at the New York Comicon, and he said that if ACBA would back the Campaign, he could probably plug it or possibly give an article-like write up of it in an ish of MMM!

If the two above groups do support us, I'm sure we can make the campaign a success.

Here are a few suggestions sent in by fans to possi-bly help the Campaign that I would like to present to you now, and get your opinions on:

1) Ron chusid says: "Don't buy ads in SF magazin-es. The same goes for horror mags. Why should it con-cern them?" Do you agree? I for one do not, because if we can get at least some support from either or both groups by saying great Science Fiction and horr-or stories could be published in comics if the code is up-dated, then we'll be that much better off.

2) We could put together a magazine similar in format to Marvel Mirror that could feature:

A) A copy of the code as it is today.
B) A copy of the suggested revised version for comparison with the original.
C) Lengthy discussions by top fans, pros, politicians, CCA officials, psycholog-ists, etc. on the pros and cons of both sets of rules.

This magazine would be sold so we would make a sub-stantial profit for our advertising funds, and all buyers would be told this so they'll know the reason for the relatively high price.

3) All forms of free advertising should be taken advantage of, and all local TV, radio stations, and newspapers might be interested in doing something on the Campaign on a "human interest" angle. This would be especially effective if a large number of comic fans live around your area.

4) Try to get the support of many of the "Founding Fathers of Fandom" like Richard Weingroff, Jerry Bails, Biljo White, Bill Spicer, etc.

All of the above are just suggestions by fans and I would like comments on them.

Now I want to answer a few general-often asked quest-ions and clear up a few misunderstandings:

1) The Comics Code is not a law, per se'. It was set up and enforced by all the major companies in business at the time of its introduction. Thus, leg-islative action could do little if any good to get it revised.

2) No company is forced to submit its comics for CCA approval, but at least when it was first used, very few distributors or retail outlets would handle unapproved comics; whether the same situation con—cerning distributors and retail outlets not handling unapproved comics still exists today is questionable.

That's all we have room for this issue; hopefully the Progress Report will be lengthened next ish! -Duffy

COCKRUM

R.Kline '70